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THE  
VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE

## Novels by Alexandre Dumas.

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MONTE CRISTO

THE THREE MUSKETEERS  
TWENTY YEARS AFTER  
THE VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE }

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS  
CHICOT, THE JESTER  
THE FORTY-FIVE GUARDSMEN }

THE CONSPIRATORS  
THE REGENT'S DAUGHTER }

MEMOIRS OF A PHYSICIAN  
THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE  
TAKING THE BASTILE  
THE COUNTESS DE CHARNY }

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
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THE  
VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE

OR

*TEN YEARS LATER*

BEING THE COMPLETION OF  
"THE THREE MUSKETEERS" AND "TWENTY YEARS AFTER"

BY  
ALEXANDRE DUMAS  
AUTHOR OF "MONTE CRISTO"

VOL. I.

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# THE VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE.

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## CHAPTER I. THE LETTER.

TOWARDS the middle of the month of May, in the year 1660, at nine o'clock in the morning, when the sun, already high in the heavens, was fast absorbing the dew from the ravenelles of the castle of Blois, a little cavalcade, composed of three men and two pages, re-entered the city by the bridge, without producing any other effect upon the passengers of the quay beyond a first movement of the hand to the head, as a salute, and a second movement of the tongue to express, in the purest French then spoken in France: "There is MONSIEUR returning from hunting." And that was all.

Whilst, however, the horses were climbing the steep acclivity which leads from the river to the castle, several shopboys approached the last horse, from whose saddle-bow a number of birds were suspended by the beak.

At seeing this, the inquisitive youths manifested with rustic freedom their contempt for such paltry sport, and, after a dissertation among themselves upon the disadvantages of hawking, they returned to their occupations. One only of the curious party, a stout, chubby, cheerful lad, having demanded how it was that Monsieur, who, from his great revenues, had it in his power to amuse himself so much better, could be satisfied with such mean diversions.

"Do you not know," one of the standers-by replied, "that Monsieur's principal amusement is to weary himself?"

The light-hearted boy shrugged his shoulders with a gesture which said as clear as day: "In that case I would rather be plain Jack than a prince." And all resumed their labours.

In the meanwhile, Monsieur continued his route with an air at once so melancholy and so majestic, that he certainly would have attracted the attention of spectators, if spectators there had been; but the good citizens of Blois could not pardon Monsieur for having chosen their gay city for an abode in which to indulge melancholy at his ease, and as often as they caught a glimpse of the illustrious *ennuyé*, they stole away gaping, or drew back their heads into the interior of their dwellings, to escape the soporific influence of that long pale face, of those watery eyes, and that languid address; so that the worthy prince was almost certain to find the streets deserted whenever he chanced to pass through them.

Now, on the part of the citizens of Blois this was a culpable piece of disrespect, for Monsieur was, after the king—nay, even, perhaps, before

the king—the greatest noble of the kingdom. In fact, God, who had granted to Louis XIV., then reigning, the honour of being son of Louis XIII., had granted to Monsieur the honour of being son of Henry IV. It was not then, or, at least, it ought not to have been, a trifling source of pride for the city of Blois, that Gaston of Orleans had chosen it as his residence, and held his court in the ancient castle of its states.

But it was the destiny of this great prince to excite the attention and admiration of the public in a very modified degree wherever he might be. Monsieur had fallen into this situation by habit.

It was not, perhaps, this which gave him that air of listlessness. Monsieur had been tolerably busy in the course of his life. A man cannot allow the heads of a dozen of his best friends to be cut off without feeling a little excitement : and as since the accession of Mazarin to power no heads had been cut off, Monsieur's occupation was gone, and his *morale* suffered from it.

The life of the poor prince was then very dull. After his little morning hawking-party on the banks of the Beuvion, or in the woods of Chiverny, Monsieur crossed the Loire, went to breakfast at Chambord, with or without an appetite, and the city of Blois heard no more of its sovereign lord and master till the next hawking-day.

So much for the ennui *extra muros*; of the ennui of the interior we will give the reader an idea if he will with us follow the cavalcade to the majestic porch of the castle of the states.

Monsieur rode a little steady-paced horse, equipped with a large saddle of red Flemish velvet, with stirrups in the shape of buskins ; the horse was of a bay colour ; Monsieur's pourpoint of crimson velvet corresponded with the cloak of the same shade and the horse's equipment, and it was only by this red appearance of the whole that the prince could be known from his two companions, the one dressed in violet, the other in green. He on the left, in violet, was his equerry ; he on the right, in green, was the *grand veneur*.

One of the pages carried two gerfalcons upon a perch, the other a hunting-horn, which he blew with a careless note at twenty paces from the castle. Every one about this listless prince did what he had to do listlessly.

At this signal, eight guards, who were lounging in the sun in the square court, ran to their halberts, and Monsieur made his solemn entry into the castle.

When he had disappeared under the shades of the porch, three or four idlers, who had followed the cavalcade to the castle, after pointing out the suspended birds to each other, dispersed with comments upon what they saw : and, when they were gone, the street, the place, and the court, all remained deserted alike.

Monsieur dismounted without speaking a word, went straight to his apartments, where his valet changed his dress, and as Madame had not yet sent orders respecting breakfast, Monsieur stretched himself upon a *chaise longue*, and was soon as fast asleep as if it had been eleven o'clock at night.

The eight guards, who concluded their service for the day was over, laid themselves down very comfortably in the sun upon some stone benches ; the grooms disappeared with their horses into the stables, and, with the exception of a few joyous birds, startling each other with their sharp chirping in the tufts of gilliflowers, it might have been thought that the whole castle was as soundly asleep as Monsieur was.

All at once, in the midst of this delicious silence, there resounded a clear ringing laugh, which caused several of the halberdiers in the enjoyment of their *siesta* to open at least one eye.

This burst of laughter proceeded from a window of the castle, visited at this moment by the sun, which united it in one of those large angles which the profiles of the chimneys mark out upon the walls before mid-day.

The little balcony of wrought iron which advanced in front of this window was furnished with a pot of red gilliflowers, another pot of primroses, and an early rose-tree, the foliage of which, beautifully green, was variegated with numerous red specks announcing future roses.

In the chamber lighted by this window was a square table, covered with an old large-flowered Haarlem tapestry : in the centre of this table was a long-necked stone bottle, in which were irises and lilies of the valley ; at each end of this table was a young girl.

The position of these two young people was singular ; they might have been taken for two boarders escaped from a convent. One of them, with both elbows on the table, and a pen in her hand, was tracing characters upon a sheet of fine Dutch paper ; the other, kneeling upon a chair, which allowed her to advance her head and bust over the back of it to the middle of the table, was watching her companion as she wrote, or rather hesitated to write.

Thence the thousand cries, the thousand railleries, the thousand laughs, one of which, more brilliant than the rest, had startled the birds of the ravenelles, and disturbed the slumbers of Monsieur's guards.

We are taking portraits now ; we shall be allowed, therefore, we hope, to sketch the two last of this chapter.

The one who was leaning in the chair—that is to say, the joyous, the laughing one—was a beautiful girl of from eighteen to twenty, with brown complexion and brown hair, splendid, from eyes which sparkled beneath strongly marked brows, and particularly from her teeth, which seemed to shine like pearls between her red coral lips. Her every movement seemed the result of a springing mine ; she did not live—she bounded.

The other, she who was writing, looked at her turbulent companion with an eye as limpid, as pure, and as blue as the heaven of that day. Her hair, of a shaded fairness, arranged with exquisite taste, fell in silky curls over her lovely mantling cheeks ; she passed across the paper a delicate hand, whose thinness announced her extreme youth. At each burst of laughter that proceeded from her friend, she raised, as if annoyed, her white shoulders in a poetical and mild manner, but they were wanting in that rich fulness of mould which was likewise to be wished in her arms and hands.

"Montalais ! Montalais !" said she at length, in a voice soft and caressing as a melody, "you laugh too loud—you laugh like a man ! You will not only draw the attention of messieurs the guards, but you will not hear Madame's bell when Madame rings."

This admonition neither made the young girl called Montalais cease to laugh nor gesticulate. She only replied : "Louise, you do not speak as you think, my dear ; you know that messieurs the guards, as you call them, have only just commenced their sleep, and that a cannon would not waken them ; you know that Madame's bell can be heard at the bridge of Blois, and that consequently I shall hear it when my services are required by Madame. What annoys you, my child, is that I laugh while you are writing ; and what you are afraid of is that Madame de Saint-Remy, your mother, should come up here, as she does sometimes when we laugh too loud ; that she should surprise us, and that she should see that enor-

mous sheet of paper upon which, in a quarter of an hour, you have only traced the words *Monsieur Raoul*. Now, you are right, my dear Louise, because after these words, 'Monsieur Raoul,' others may be put so significant and so incendiary as to cause Madame de Saint-Remy to burst out into fire and flames! *Hein!* is not that true now?—say."

And Montalais redoubled her laughter and noisy provocations.

The fair girl at length became quite angry; she tore the sheet of paper on which, in fact, the words "*Monsieur Raoul*" were written in good characters; and, crushing the paper in her trembling hands, she threw it out of the window.

"There! there!" said Mademoiselle de Montalais; "there is our little lamb, our gentle dove angry! Don't be afraid, Louise—Madame de Saint-Remy will not come; and if she should, you know I have a quick ear. Besides, what can be more permissible than to write to an old friend of twelve years' standing, particularly when the letter begins with the words, '*Monsieur Raoul*'?"

"It is all very well—I will not write to him at all," said the young girl.

"Ah, ah! in good sooth, Montalais is properly punished," cried the jeering brunette, still laughing. "Come, come! let us try another sheet of paper, and finish our despatch off hand. Good! there is the bell ringing now. By my faith, so much the worse! Madame must wait, or else do without her first maid of honour this morning."

A bell, in fact, did ring; it announced that Madame had finished her toilette, and waited for Monsieur to give her his hand, and conduct her from the *salon* to the refectory.

This formality being accomplished with great ceremony, the husband and wife breakfasted, and then separated till the hour of dinner, invariably fixed at two o'clock.

The sound of this bell caused a door to be opened in the offices on the left hand of the court, from which filed two *maîtres d'hôtel*, followed by eight scullions bearing a kind of hand-barrow loaded with dishes under silver covers.

One of the *maîtres d'hôtel*, the first in rank, touched one of the guards, who was snoring on his bench, slightly with his wand; he even carried his kindness so far as to place the halbert which stood against the wall in the hands of the man, stupid with sleep, after which the soldier, without explanation, escorted the *viande* of Monsieur to the refectory, preceded by a page and the two *maîtres d'hôtel*.

Wherever the *viande* passed, the soldiers ported arms.

Mademoiselle de Montalais and her companion had watched from their window the details of this ceremony, to which, by the bye, they must have been pretty well accustomed. But they did not look so much from curiosity as to be assured they should not be disturbed. So guards, scullions, *maîtres d'hôtel*, and pages having passed, they resumed their places at the table; and the sun, which, through the window-frame, had for an instant fallen upon those two charming countenances, now only shed its light upon the gilliflowers, primroses, and rose-tree.

"Bah!" said Mademoiselle de Montalais, taking her place again; "Madame will breakfast very well without me!"

"Oh! Montalais, you will be punished!" replied the other girl, sitting down quietly in hers.

"Punished, indeed!—that is to say, deprived of a ride! That is just the way in which I wish to be punished. To go out in the grand coach, perched upon a doorstep; to turn to the left, twist round to the right, over

roads full of ruts, where we cannot exceed a league in two hours ; and then to come back straight towards the wing of the castle in which is the window of Mary de Medici, so that Madame never fails to say : ' Could one believe it possible that Mary de Medici should have escaped from that window—forty-seven feet high ? The mother of two princes and three princesses ! ' If you call that relaxation, Louise, all I ask is to be punished every day ; particularly when my punishment is to remain with you and write such interesting letters as we write ! "

" Montalais ! Montalais ! there are duties to be performed."

" You talk of them very much at your ease, my little heart !—you, who are left quite free amidst this tedious court. You are the only person that reaps the advantages of them without incurring the trouble,—you, who are really more one of Madame's maids of honour than I am, because Madame makes her affection for your father-in-law glance off upon you ; so that you enter this dull house as the birds fly into yonder court, inhaling the air, pecking the flowers, picking up the grain, without having the least service to perform, or the least annoyance to undergo. And you talk to me of duties to be performed ! In sooth, my pretty idler, what are your own proper duties, unless to write to the handsome Raoul ? And even that you don't do ; so that it looks to me as if you likewise were rather negligent of your duties ! "

Louise assumed a serious air, leant her chin upon her hand, and, in a tone full of candid remonstrance, " And do you reproach me with my good fortune ? " said she. " Can you have the heart to do it ? You have a future ; you belong to the court ; the king, if he should marry, will require Monsieur to be near his person ; you will see splendid *fêtes* ; you will see the king, who they say is so handsome, so agreeable ! "

" Ay, and still more, I shall see Raoul, who attends upon M. le Prince," added Montalais, maliciously.

" Poor Raoul ! " sighed Louise.

" Now is the time to write to him, my pretty dear ! Come, begin again, with that famous ' Monsieur Raoul ' which figures at the top of the poor torn sheet."

She then held the pen towards her, and with a charming smile encouraged her hand, which quickly traced the words she named.

" What next ? " asked the younger of the two girls.

" Why, now write what you think, Louise," replied Montalais.

" Are you quite sure I think of anything ? "

" You think of somebody, and that amounts to the same thing, or rather even worse."

" Do you think so, Montalais ? "

" Louise, Louise, your blue eyes are as deep as the sea I saw at Boulogne last year ! No, no, I mistake—the sea is perfidious : your eyes are as deep as the azure yonder—look !—over our heads ! "

" Well, since you can read so well in my eyes, tell me what I am thinking about, Montalais."

" In the first place, you don't think, *Monsieur Raoul* ; you think *My dear Raoul*."

" Oh !—"

" Never blush for such a trifle as that ! ' My dear Raoul,' we will say,—You implore me to write to you at Paris, where you are detained by your attendance on M. le Prince. As you must be very dull there, to seek for amusement in the remembrance of a *provinciale*—"

Louise rose up suddenly. " No, Montalais," said she, with a smile ; " I

don't think a word of that. Look, this is what I think ;" and she seized the pen boldly, and traced, with a firm hand, the following words :

"I should have been very unhappy if your entreaties to obtain a remembrance of me had been less warm. Everything here reminds me of our early days, which so quickly passed away, which so delightfully flew by, that no others will ever replace the charm of them in my heart."

Montalais, who watched the flying pen, and read, the wrong way upwards, as fast as her friend wrote, here interrupted by clapping her hands. "Capital !" cried she ; "there is frankness—there is heart—there is style ! Show these Parisians, my dear, that Blois is the city for fine language !"

"He knows very well that Blois was a Paradise to me," replied the girl.

"That is exactly what you mean to say ; and you speak like an angel."

"I will finish, Montalais," and she continued as follows : "You often think of me, you say, Monsieur Raoul : I thank you ; but that does not surprise me, when I recollect how often our hearts have beaten close to each other."

"Oh ! oh !" said Montalais. "Beware, my lamb ! You are scattering your wool, and there are wolves about."

Louise was about to reply when the gallop of a horse resounded under the porch of the castle.

"What is that ?" said Montalais, approaching the window. "A handsome cavalier, by my faith !"

"Oh !—Raoul !" exclaimed Louise, who had made the same movement as her friend, and, becoming pale as death, sunk back beside her unfinished letter.

"Now, he is a clever lover, upon my word !" cried Montalais ; "he arrives just at the proper moment."

"Come in, come in, I implore you !" murmured Louise.

"Bah ! he does not know me. Let me see what he has come here for."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MESSENGER.

MADemoiselle DE MONTALAIS was right : the young cavalier was goodly to look upon.

He was a young man of from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, tall and slender, wearing gracefully the picturesque military costume of the period. His large boots contained a foot which Mademoiselle de Montalais might not have disowned if she had been transformed into a man. With one of his delicate but nervous hands he checked his horse in the middle of the court, and with the other raised his hat, whose long plumes shaded his at once serious and ingenuous countenance.

The guards, roused by the steps of the horse, awoke, and were on foot in a minute. The young man waited till one of them was close to his saddle-bow : then, stooping towards him, in a clear, distinct voice, which was perfectly audible at the window where the two girls were concealed, "A message for his royal highness," he said.

"Ah, ah !" cried the soldier. "Officer, a messenger !"

But this brave guard knew very well that no officer would appear, seeing that the only one who could have appeared dwelt at the other side of the castle, in an apartment looking into the gardens. So he hastened to add : "The officer, monsieur, is on his rounds ; but, in his absence, M. de Saint-Remy, the *maître d'hôtel*, shall be informed."

"M. de Saint-Remy?" repeated the cavalier, slightly blushing.

"Do you know him?"

"Why, yes; but request him, if you please, that my visit be announced to his royal highness as soon as possible."

"It appears to be pressing," said the guard, as if speaking to himself, but really in the hope of obtaining an answer.

The messenger made an affirmative sign with his head.

"In that case," said the guard, "I will go and seek the *maître d'hôtel* myself."

The young man, in the meantime, dismounted; and whilst the others were making their remarks upon the fine horse the cavalier rode, the soldier returned.

"Your pardon, young gentleman; but your name, if you please?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne, on the part of his highness M. le Prince de Condé."

The soldier made a profound bow, and, as if the name of the conqueror of Rocroy and Sens had given him wings, he stepped lightly up the steps leading to the ante-chamber.

M. de Bragelonne had not had time to fasten his horse to the iron bars of the *perron*, when M. de Saint-Remy came running, out of breath, supporting his capacious stomach with one hand, whilst with the other he cut the air as a fisherman cleaves the waves with his oar.

"Ah, Monsieur le Vicomte! You at Blois!" cried he. "Well, that is a wonder! Good day to you—good day, Monsieur Raoul."

"I offer you a thousand respects, M. de Saint-Remy."

"How Madame de la Vall—I mean, how delighted Madame de Saint-Remy will be to see you! But come in. His royal highness is at breakfast—must he be interrupted? Is the matter serious?"

"Yes, and no, Monsieur de Saint-Remy. A moment's delay, however, would be disagreeable to his royal highness."

"If that is the case, we will force the *consigne*, Monsieur le Vicomte. Come in. Besides, Monsieur is in an excellent humour to-day. And then, you bring news, do you not?"

"Great news, Monsieur de Saint-Remy."

"And good, I presume?"

"Excellent."

"Come quickly, come quickly, then!" cried the worthy man, putting his dress to rights as he went along.

Raoul followed him, hat in hand, and a little disconcerted at the noise made by his spurs in these immense *salons*.

As soon as he had disappeared in the interior of the palace, the window of the court was repeopled, and an animated whispering betrayed the emotion of the two girls. They soon appeared to have formed a resolution, for one of the two faces disappeared from the window. This was the brunette; the other remained behind the balcony, concealed by the flowers, watching attentively through the branches the *perron* by which M. de Bragelonne had entered the castle.

In the mean time the object of so much laudable curiosity continued his route, following the steps of the *maître d'hôtel*. The noise of quick steps, an odour of wine and viands, a clinking of crystals and plates, warned them that they were coming to the end of their course.

The pages, valets, and officers, assembled in the offices which preceded the refectory, welcomed the new-comer with the proverbial politeness of the country: some of them were acquainted with Raoul, and all knew that

he came from Paris. It might be said that his arrival for a moment suspended the service. In fact, a page who was pouring out wine for his royal highness, on hearing the jingling of spurs in the next chamber, turned round like a child, without perceiving that he was continuing to pour out, not into the glass, but upon the table-cloth.

Madame, who was not so preoccupied as her glorious spouse was, remarked this distraction of the page. "Well!" exclaimed she.

"Well!" repeated Monsieur; "what is going on then?"

M. de Saint-Remy, who had just introduced his head through the doorway, took advantage of the moment.

"Why am I to be disturbed?" said Gaston, helping himself to a thick slice of one of the largest salmon that had ever ascended the Loire to be captured between Painbœuf and Saint-Nazaire.

"There is a messenger from Paris. Oh! but after monseigneur has breakfasted will do; there is plenty of time."

"From Paris!" cried the prince, letting his fork fall. "A messenger from Paris, do you say? And on whose part does this messenger come?"

"On the part of M. le Prince," said the *maître d'hôtel* promptly.

Every one knows that the Prince de Condé was so called.

"A messenger from M. le Prince!" said Gaston, with an inquietude that escaped none of the assistants, and consequently redoubled the general curiosity.

Monsieur, perhaps, fancied himself brought back again to the happy times when the opening of a door gave him an emotion, in which every letter might contain a state secret,—in which every message was connected with a dark and complicated intrigue. Perhaps, likewise, that great name of M. le Prince expanded itself, beneath the roofs of Blois, into the proportions of a phantom.

Monsieur pushed away his plate.

"Shall I tell the envoy to wait?" asked M. de Saint-Remy.

A glance from Madame emboldened Gaston, who replied: "No, no; let him come in at once, on the contrary. *Apropos*, who is he?"

"A gentleman of this country, M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"Ah, very well! Introduce him, Saint-Remy—introduce him."

And when he had let fall these words, with his accustomed gravity, Monsieur turned his eyes, in a certain manner, upon the people of his suite, so that all, pages, officers, and equerries, quitted the service, knives, and goblets, and made towards the second chamber a retreat as rapid as it was disorderly.

This little army had dispersed in two files when Raoul de Bragelonne, preceded by M. de Saint-Remy, entered the refectory.

The short moment of solitude in which this retreat had left him, permitted Monsieur the time to assume a diplomatic countenance. He did not turn round, but waited till the *maître d'hôtel* should bring the messenger face to face with him.

Raoul stopped even with the lower end of the table, so as to be exactly between Monsieur and Madame. From this place he made a profound bow to Monsieur, and a very humble one to Madame; then, drawing himself up into military *pose*, he waited for Monsieur to address him.

On his part the prince waited till the doors were hermetically closed, he would not turn round to ascertain the fact, as that would have been derogatory to his dignity, but he listened with all his ears for the noise of the lock, which would promise him at least an appearance of secrecy.

The doors being closed, Monsieur raised his eyes towards the vicomte, and said, "It appears that you come from Paris, monsieur?"

"This minute, monseigneur."

"How is the king?"

"His majesty is in perfect health, monseigneur."

"And my sister-in-law?"

"Her majesty the queen-mother still suffers from the complaint in her lungs, but for the last month she has been rather better."

"Somebody told me you came on the part of M. le Prince. They must have been mistaken, surely?"

"No, monseigneur; M. le Prince has charged me to convey this letter to your royal highness, and I am to wait for an answer to it."

Raoul had been a little annoyed by this cold and cautious reception, and his voice insensibly sank to a low key.

The prince forgot that he was the cause of this apparent mystery, and his fears returned.

He received the letter from the Prince de Condé with a haggard look, unsealed it as he would have unsealed a suspicious packet, and, in order to read it so that no one should remark the effects of it upon his countenance, he turned round.

Madame followed, with an anxiety almost equal to that of the prince, every manœuvre of her august husband.

Raoul, impassible, and a little disengaged by the attention of his hosts, looked from his place through the open window at the gardens and the statues which peopled them.

"Well!" cried Monsieur, all at once, with a cheerful smile; "here is an agreeable surprise, and a charming letter from M. le Prince. Look, Madame!"

The table was too large to allow the arm of the prince to reach the hand of Madame; Raoul sprang forward to be their intermediary, and did it with so good a grace as to procure a flattering acknowledgment from the princess.

"You know the contents of this letter, no doubt?" said Gaston to Raoul.

"Yes, monseigneur; M. le Prince at first gave me the message verbally, but upon reflection his highness took up his pen."

"It is beautiful writing," said Madame, "but I cannot read it."

"Will you read it to Madame, M. de Bragelonne?" said the duke.

"Yes; read it, if you please, monsieur."

Raoul began to read, Monsieur giving again all his attention. The letter was conceived in these terms:

"MONSEIGNEUR,—The king is about to set out for the frontiers. You are aware that the marriage of his majesty is concluded upon. The king has done me the honour to appoint me his *maréchal-des-logis* for this journey, and as I knew with what joy his majesty would pass a day at Blois, I venture to ask your royal highness's permission to mark the house you inhabit as our quarters. If, however, the suddenness of this request should create to your royal highness any embarrassment, I entreat you to say so by the messenger I send, a gentleman of my suite, M. le Vicomte de Bragelonne. My itinerary will depend upon your royal highness's determination, and, instead of passing through Blois, we shall come through Vendôme and Romorantin. I venture to hope that your royal highness will be pleased with my arrangement, it being the expression of my boundless desire to make myself agreeable to you."

"Nothing can be more gracious towards us," said Madame, who had

more than once consulted the looks of her husband during the reading of the letter. "The king here !" exclaimed she, in a rather louder tone than would have been necessary to preserve secrecy.

"Monsieur," said his royal highness in his turn, "you will offer my thanks to M. le Prince de Condé, and express to him my gratitude for the pleasure he has done me." Raoul bowed.

"On what day will his majesty arrive?" continued the prince.

"The king, monseigneur, will, in all probability, arrive this evening."

"But how, then, could he have known my reply if it had been in the negative?"

"I was desired, monseigneur, to return in all haste to Beaugency, to give counter-orders to the courier, who was himself to go back immediately with counter-orders to M. le Prince."

"His majesty is at Orleans, then?"

"Much nearer, monseigneur; his majesty must by this time have arrived at Meung."

"Does the court accompany him?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"*Apropos*, I forgot to ask you after M. le Cardinal."

"His eminence appears to enjoy good health, monseigneur."

"His nieces accompany him, no doubt?"

"No, monseigneur; his eminence has ordered the Mesdemoiselles de Mancini to set out for Brouage. They will follow the left bank of the Loire, while the court will come by the right."

"What! Mademoiselle Mary de Mancini quit the court in that manner?" asked Monsieur, his reserve beginning to diminish.

"Mademoiselle Mary de Mancini in particular," replied Raoul discreetly.

A fugitive smile, an imperceptible vestige of his ancient spirit of intrigue, shot across the pale face of the prince.

"Thanks, M. de Bragelonne," then said Monsieur. "You would, perhaps, not be willing to render M. le Prince the commission with which I would charge you, and that is, that his messenger has been very agreeable to me: but I will tell him so myself."

Raoul bowed his thanks to Monsieur for the honour he had done him.

Monsieur made a sign to Madame, who struck a bell which was placed at her right hand; M. de Saint-Remy entered, and the room was soon filled with people.

"Messieurs," said the prince, "his majesty is about to pay me the honour of passing a day at Blois; I depend upon the king, my nephew, not having to repent of the favour he does my house."

"*Vive le Roi!*" cried all the officers of the household with frantic enthusiasm, and M. de Saint-Remy louder than the rest.

Gaston hung down his head with evident chagrin. He had all his life been obliged to hear, or rather to undergo, this cry of "*Vive le Roi!*" which passed over him. For a long time, being unaccustomed to hear it, his ear had had rest, and now a younger, more vivacious, and more brilliant royalty rose up before him, like a new and a more painful provocation.

Madame perfectly understood the sufferings of that timid, gloomy heart; she rose from the table, Monsieur imitated her mechanically, and all the domestics, with a buzzing like that of several bee-hives, surrounded Raoul for the purpose of questioning him.

Madame saw this movement, and called M. de Saint-Remy. "This is not the time for gossiping, but working," said she, with the tone of an angry housekeeper.

M. de Saint-Remy hastened to break the circle formed by the officers round Raoul, so that the latter was able to gain the antechamber.

"Care will be taken of that gentleman, I hope," added Madame, addressing M. de Saint-Remy.

The worthy man immediately hastened after Raoul. "Madame desires refreshment to be offered to you," said he; "and there is, besides, a lodging for you in the castle."

"Thanks, M. de Saint-Remy," replied Raoul; but you know how anxious I must be to pay my duty to M. le Comte, my father."

"That is true, that is true, Monsieur Raoul; present him, at the same time, my humble respects, if you please."

Raoul thus once more got rid of the old gentleman, and pursued his way. As he was passing under the porch, leading his horse by the bridle, a soft voice called him from the depths of an obscure path.

"Monsieur Raoul!" said the voice.

The young man turned round surprised, and saw a dark-complexioned girl, who, with a finger on her lip, held out her other hand to him. This girl was perfectly unknown to him.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE INTERVIEW.

RAOUL made one step towards the girl who thus called him.

"But my horse, Madame?" said he.

"Oh! you are terribly embarrassed! Go out that way—there is a shed in the outer court; fasten your horse, and return quickly."

"I obey, madame."

Raoul was not four minutes in performing what he had been directed to do; he returned to the little door, where, in darkness, he found his mysterious conductress waiting for him, on the first steps of a winding staircase.

"Are you brave enough to follow me, monsieur knight-errant?" asked the girl, laughing at the momentary hesitation Raoul had manifested.

The latter replied by springing up the dark staircase after her. They thus climbed up three stories, he behind her, touching with his hands, when he felt for the banister, a silk dress which rubbed against each side of the staircase. At every false step made by Raoul, his conductress cried, "Hush!" and held out to him a soft and perfumed hand.

"One would mount thus to the donjon of the castle without being conscious of fatigue," said Raoul.

"All which means, monsieur, that you are very much perplexed, very tired, and very uneasy. But be of good cheer, monsieur; here we are, arrived."

The girl threw open a door, which immediately, without any transition, filled with a flood of light the landing of the staircase, at the top of which Raoul appeared, holding fast by the balustrade.

The girl continued to walk on—he followed her; she entered a chamber—he did the same.

As soon as he was fairly in the net, he heard a loud cry, and, turning round, saw at two paces from him, with her hands clasped and her eyes closed, that beautiful fair girl with blue eyes and white shoulders, who, recognising him, had called him Raoul.

He saw her, and divined at once so much love and so much joy in the expression of her countenance, that he sank on his knees in the middle of the chamber, murmuring, on his part, the name of Louise.

"Ah! Montalais!—Montalais!" sighed she, "it is very wicked to deceive one so."

"Who, I? I have deceived you?"

"Yes; you told me you would go down to inquire the news, and you have brought up monsieur!"

"Well, I was obliged to do so—how else could he have received the letter you wrote him?"

And she pointed with her finger to the letter which was still upon the table. Raoul made a step to take it; Louise, more rapid, although she had sprung forward with a sufficiently remarkable physical hesitation, reached out her hand to stop him. Raoul came in contact with that trembling hand, took it within his own, and carried it so respectfully to his lips, that he might be said to have deposited a sigh upon it rather than a kiss.

In the meantime, Mademoiselle de Montalais had taken the letter, folded it carefully, as women do, in three folds, and slipped it into her bosom.

"Don't be afraid, Louise," said she; "monsieur will no more venture to take it hence than the defunct king Louis XIII. ventured to take billets from the corsage of Mademoiselle de Hautefort."

Raoul blushed at seeing the smile of the two girls: and he did not remark that the hand of Louise remained in his.

"There!" said Montalais, "you have pardoned me, Louise, for having brought monsieur to you; and you, monsieur, bear me no malice for having followed me to see mademoiselle. Now, then, peace being made, let us chat like old friends. Present me, Louise, to M. de Bragelonne."

"Monsieur le Viscomte," said Louise, with her quiet grace and ingenuous smile, "I have the honour to present to you Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais, maid of honour to her royal highness Madame, and moreover my friend—my excellent friend."

Raoul bowed ceremoniously.

"And me, Louise," said he—"will you not present me also to mademoiselle?"

"Oh, she knows you—she knows all!"

This unguarded expression made Montalais laugh and Raoul sigh with happiness, for he interpreted it thus: "*She knows all our love.*"

"The ceremonies being over, Monsieur le Vicomte," said Montalais, "take a chair, and tell us quickly the news you bring flying thus."

"Mademoiselle, it is no longer a secret; the king, on his way to Poitiers, will stop at Blois, to visit his royal highness."

"The king here!" exclaimed Montalais, clapping her hands. "What! are we going to see the court? Only think, Louise—the real court from Paris! Oh, good heavens! But when will this happen, monsieur?"

"Perhaps this evening, mademoiselle; at latest, to-morrow."

Montalais lifted her shoulders in sign of vexation.

"No time to get ready! No time to prepare a single dress! We are as far behind the fashions as the Poles. We shall look like portraits of the times of Henry IV. Ah, monsieur! this is sad news you bring us!"

"But, mesdemoiselles, you will be still beautiful."

"That's stale! Yes, we shall be always beautiful, because nature has made us passable; but we shall be ridiculous, because the fashion will have forgotten us. Alas! ridiculous! I shall be thought ridiculous—I!"

"And by whom?" said Louise, innocently.

"By whom? You are a strange girl, my dear. Is that a question to put to me? I mean everybody; I mean the courtiers, the nobles; I mean the king."

"Pardon me, my good friend ; but as here every one is accustomed to see us as we are——"

"Granted ; but that is about to change, and we shall be ridiculous, even for Blois ; for close to us will be seen the fashions from Paris, and they will perceive that we are in the fashion of Blois ! It is enough to make one wild !"

"Console yourself, mademoiselle."

"Well, so let it be ! After all, so much the worse for those who do not find me to their taste !" said Montalais, philosophically.

"They would be very difficult to please," replied Raoul, faithful to his regular system of gallantry.

"Thank you, Monsieur le Vicomte. We were saying, then, that the king is coming to Blois ?"

"With all the court."

"Mesdemoiselles de Mancini, will they be with them ?"

"No, certainly not."

"But as the King, it is said, cannot do without Mademoiselle Mary ?"

"Mademoiselle, the king must do without her. M. le Cardinal will have it so. He has exiled his nieces to Brouage."

"He !—the hypocrite !"

"Hush !" said Louise, pressing a finger on her friend's rosy lips.

"Bah ! nobody can hear me. I say that old Mazarino Mazarini is a hypocrite, who burns impatiently to make his niece queen of France."

"That cannot be, mademoiselle, since M. le Cardinal, on the contrary, has brought about the marriage of his majesty with the Infanta Maria Theresa."

Montalais looked Raoul full in the face, and said, "And do you Parisians believe in these tales ? Well ! we are a little more cunning than you at Blois."

"Mademoiselle, if the king goes beyond Poitiers and sets out for Spain ; if the articles of the marriage contract are agreed upon by Don Luis de Haro and his eminence, you must plainly perceive that it is not child's play."

"All very fine ! but the king is king, I suppose ?"

"No doubt, mademoiselle ; but the cardinal is the cardinal."

"The king is not a man, then ! And he does not love Mary Mancini ?"

"He adores her."

"Well, he will marry her then. We shall have war with Spain. M. Mazarin will spend a few of the millions he has put away ; our gentlemen will perform prodigies of valour in their encounters with the proud Castilians, and many of them will return crowned with laurels, to be recrowned by us with myrtles. Now, that is my view of politics."

"Montalais you are wild !" said Louise, "and every exaggeration attracts you as light does a moth."

"Louise, you are so extremely reasonable, that you will never know how to love."

"Oh !" said Louise, in a tone of tender reproach, "don't you see, Montalais ? The queen-mother desires to marry her son to the infanta ; would you wish him to disobey his mother ? Is it for a royal heart like his to set such a bad example ? When parents forbid love, love must be banished."

And Louise sighed : Raoul cast down his eyes, with an expression of constraint. Montalais, on her part, laughed aloud.

"Well, I have no parents !" said she.

"You are acquainted, without doubt, with the state of health of M. le Comte de la Fère ?" said Louise, after breathing that sigh which had revealed so many griefs in its eloquent utterance.

"No, mademoiselle," replied Raoul, "I have not yet paid my respects to my father; I was going to his house when Mademoiselle de Montalais so kindly stopped me. I hope the comte is well. You have heard nothing to the contrary, have you?"

"No, M. Raoul—nothing, thank God!"

Here, for several instants, ensued a silence, during which two spirits, which followed the same idea, communicated perfectly, without even the assistance of a single glance.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Montalais in a fright; "there is somebody coming up."

"Who can it be?" said Louise, rising in great agitation.

"Mesdemoiselles, I inconvenience you very much. I have, without doubt, been very indiscreet," stammered Raoul, very ill at ease.

"It is a heavy step," said Louise.

"Ah! if it is only M. Malicorne," added Montalais, "do not disturb yourselves."

Louise and Raoul looked at each other to inquire who M. Malicorne could be.

"There is no occasion to mind him," continued Montalais; "he is not jealous."

"But, mademoiselle——" said Raoul.

"Yes, I understand. Well, he is as discreet as I am."

"Good heavens!" cried Louise, who had applied her ear to the door, which had been left ajar; "it is my mother's step!"

"Madame de Saint-Remy! Where shall I hide myself?" exclaimed Raoul, catching at the dress of Montalais, who looked quite bewildered.

"Yes," said she; "yes, I know the clicking of those pattens! It is our excellent mother. M. le Vicomte, what a pity it is the window looks upon a stone pavement, and that fifty paces below it!"

Raoul glanced at the balcony in despair. Louise seized his arm, and held it tight.

"Oh, how silly I am!" said Montalais; "have I not the robe-of-ceremony closet? It looks as if it were made on purpose."

It was quite time to act; Madame de Saint-Remy was coming up at a quicker pace than usual. She gained the landing at the moment when Montalais, as in all scenes of surprises, shut the closet by leaning with her back against the door.

"Ah!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy, "you are here, are you, Louise?"

"Yes, madame," replied she, more pale than if she had committed a great crime.

"Well, well!"

"Pray be seated, madame," said Montalais, offering her a chair, which she placed so that the back was towards the closet.

"Thank you, Mademoiselle Aure—thank you. Come, my child, be quick."

"Where do you wish me to go, madame?"

"Why, home, to be sure; have you not to prepare your toilette?"

"What did you say?" cried Montalais, hastening to affect surprise, so fearful was she that Louise would in some way commit herself.

"You don't know the news, then?" said Madame de Saint-Remy.

"What news, madame, is it possible for two girls to learn up in this dovecot?"

"What! have you seen nobody?"

"Madame, you talk in enigmas, and you torment us at a slow fire!"

cried Montalais, who, terrified at seeing Louise become paler and paler, did not know to what saint to put up her vows.

At length she caught an eloquent look of her companion's, one of those looks which would convey intelligence to a brick wall. Louise directed her attention to a hat—Raoul's unlucky hat, which was set out in all its feathery splendour upon the table.

Montalais sprang towards it, and, seizing it with her left hand, passed it behind her into the right, concealing it as she was speaking.

"Well," said Madame de Saint-Remy, "a courier has arrived announcing the approach of the king. There, mesdemoiselles ; there is something to make you put on your best looks."

"Quick, quick !" cried Montalais. "Follow Madame your mother, Louise ; and leave me to get ready my dress of ceremony."

Louise arose ; her mother took her by the hand, and led her out on to the landing.

"Come along," said she ; then adding in a lower voice, "When I forbid you to come to the apartment of Montalais, why do you do so ?"

"Madame, she is my friend. Besides, I was but just come."

"Did you see nobody concealed while you were there ?"

"Madame !"

"I saw a man's hat, I tell you—the hat of that fellow, that good-for-nothing !"

"Madame !" repeated Louise.

"Of that do-nothing De Malicorne ! A maid of honour to have such company—fie ! fie !" And their voices were lost in the depths of the narrow staircase.

Montalais had not missed a word of this conversation, which echo conveyed to her as if through a tunnel. She shrugged her shoulders on seeing Raoul, who had listened likewise, issue from the closet.

"Poor Montalais !" said she, "the victim of friendship ! Poor Malicorne, the victim of love !"

She stopped on viewing the tragi-comic face of Raoul, who was vexed at having, in one day, surprised so many secrets.

"Oh, mademoiselle !" said he ; "how can we repay your kindnesses ?"

"Oh, we will balance accounts some day," said she. "For the present, begone, M. de Bragelonne, for Madame de Saint-Remy is not over indulgent ; and any indiscretion on her part might bring hither a domiciliary visit, which would be disagreeable to all parties."

"But Louise—how shall I know——"

"Begone ! begone ! King Louis XI. knew very well what he was about when he invented the post."

"Alas !" sighed Raoul.

"And am I not here—I, who am worth all the posts in the kingdom ? Quick, I say, to horse ! so that if Madame de Saint-Remy should return for the purpose of preaching me a lesson on morality, she may not find you here."

"She would tell my father, would she not ?" murmured Raoul.

"And you would be scolded. Ah, vicomte, it is very plain you come from court ; you are as timid as the king. *Peste !* at Blois we contrive better than that, to do without papa's consent. Ask Malicorne else !"

An! at these words the girl pushed Raoul out of the room by the shoulders. He glided swiftly down to the porch, regained his horse, mounted, and set off as if he had had Monsieur's guards at his heels.

## CHAPTER IV.

## FATHER AND SON.

RAOUL followed the well-known road, so dear to his memory, which led from Blois to the residence of the Comte de la Fère.

The reader will dispense with a second description of that habitation : he, perhaps, has been with us there before, and knows it. Only, since our last journey thither, the walls had taken a greyer tint, and the brick-work assumed a more harmonious copper tone ; the trees had grown, and many that then only stretched their slender branches along the tops of the hedges, now, bushy, strong, and luxuriant, cast around, beneath boughs swollen with sap, a thick shade of flowers or fruit for the benefit of the traveller.

Raoul perceived, from a distance, the two little turrets, the dovecot in the elms, and the flights of pigeons, which wheeled incessantly around that brick cone, seemingly without a power to quit it, like the sweet memories which hover round a spirit at peace.

As he approached, he heard the noise of the pulleys which grated under the weight of the massy pails ; he also fancied he heard the melancholy moaning of the water which falls back again into the wells—a sad, funereal, solemn sound, which strikes the ear of the child and the poet—both dreamers—which the English call *splash* ; Arabian poets, *gasgachau* ; and which we Frenchmen, who would be poets, can only translate by a paraphrase—the noise of water falling into water.

It was more than a year since Raoul had been to visit his father. He had passed the whole time in the household of M. le Prince. In fact, after all the commotions of the Fronde, of the early period of which we formerly attempted to give a sketch, Louis de Condé had made a public, solemn, and frank reconciliation with the court. During all the time that the rupture between the king and the prince had lasted, the prince, who had long entertained a great regard for Bragelonne, had in vain offered him advantages of the most dazzling kind for a young man. The Comte de la Fère, still faithful to his principles of loyalty and royalty, one day developed before his son in the vaults of Saint-Denis,—the Comte de la Fère, in the name of his son, had always declined them. Moreover, instead of following M. de Condé in his rebellion, the vicomte had followed M. de Turenne, fighting for the king. Then, when M. de Turenne, in his turn had appeared to abandon the royal cause, he had quitted M. de Turenne, as he had quitted M. de Condé. It resulted from this invariable line of conduct, that, as Condé and Turenne had never been conquerors of each other but under the standard of the king, Raoul, however young, had ten victories inscribed on his list of services, and not one defeat from which his bravery or conscience had to suffer.

Raoul, therefore, had, in compliance with the wish of his father, served obstinately and passively the fortunes of Louis XIV., in spite of the tergiversations which were endemic, and, it might be said, inevitable, at that period.

M. de Condé, on being restored to favour, had at once availed himself of all the privileges of the amnesty, to ask for many things back again which had been granted him before, and among others, Raoul. M. de la Fère, with his invariable good sense, had immediately sent him again to the prince.

A year, then, had passed away since the separation of the father and

ing with you. The prince kindly appointed me no other, which was so much in accord with my wish."

"Is the king well?"

"Perfectly."

"And monsieur le prince also?"

"As usual, monsieur."

The comte forgot to inquire after Mazarin ; that was an old habit.

"Well, Raoul, since you are entirely mine, I will give up my whole day to you. Embrace me—again, again ! You are at home, vicomte ! Ah ! there is our old Grimaud ! Come in, Grimaud ; monsieur le vicomte is desirous of embracing you likewise."

The good old man did not require to be twice told ; he rushed in with open arms, Raoul meeting him halfway.

"Now, if you please, we will go into the garden, Raoul. I will show you the new lodging I have had prepared for you during your leave of absence ; and, whilst examining the last winter's plantations, and two saddle-horses I have just changed for, you will give me all the news of our friends in Paris."

The comte closed his manuscript, took the young man's arm, and went out into the garden with him.

Grimaud looked at Raoul with a melancholy air as the young man passed out ; observing that his head nearly touched the *traverse* of the doorway, stroking his white *royale*, he allowed the single word "GROWN !" to escape him.

## CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH SOMETHING WILL BE SAID OF CROPOLI.—OF CROPOLI AND OF A GREAT UNKNOWN PAINTER.

WHILST the Comte de la Fère with Raoul visits the new buildings he has had erected, and the new horses he has bought, with the reader's permission we will lead him back to the city of Blois, and make him a witness of the unaccustomed activity which pervades that city.

It was in the hotels that the surprise of the news brought by Raoul was most sensibly felt.

In fact, the king and the court at Blois, that is to say, a hundred horsemen, ten carriages, two hundred horses, as many lackeys as masters—where was this crowd to be housed ? Where were to be lodged all the gentry of the neighbourhood, who would flock in in two or three hours after the news had enlarged the circle of its report, like the increasing circumferences produced by a stone thrown into a placid lake ?

Blois, as peaceful in the morning, as we have seen, as the calmest lake in the world, at the announcement of the royal arrival, was suddenly filled with the tumult and buzzing of a swarm of bees.

All the servants of the castle, under the inspection of the officers, were sent into the city in quest of provisions, and ten horsemen were despatched to the preserves of Chambord to seek for game, to the fisheries of Beuvion for fish, and to the gardens of Chaverny for fruits and flowers.

Precious tapestries, and lustres with great gilt chains, were drawn from the wardrobes ; an army of the poor were engaged in sweeping the courts and washing the stone fronts, whilst their wives went in droves to the meadows beyond the Loire, to gather green boughs and field-flowers. The whole

city, not to be behind in this luxury of cleanliness, assumed its best toilette, with the help of brushes, brooms, and water.

The kennels of the upper city, swollen by these continued lotions, became rivers at the bottom of the city, and the pavement, generally very muddy, it must be allowed, took a clean face, and absolutely shone in the friendly rays of the sun.

Next the music was to be provided : drawers were emptied ; the shopkeepers had a glorious trade in wax, ribands, and sword knots : housekeepers laid in stores of bread, meat, and spices. Already numbers of the citizens, whose houses were furnished as if for a siege, having nothing more to do, donned their festive clothes, and directed their course towards the city gate, in order to be the first to signal or see the *cortège*. They knew very well that the king would not arrive before night, perhaps not before the next morning. But what is expectation but a kind of folly, and what is that folly but an excess of hope?

In the lower city, at scarcely a hundred paces from the Castle of the States, between the mall and the castle, in a sufficiently handsome street, then called Rue Vieille, and which must, in fact, have been very old, stood a venerable edifice, with pointed gables, of squat and large dimensions, ornamented with three windows looking into the street on the first floor, with two in the second, and with a little *œil de bœuf* in the third.

On the sides of this triangle had recently been constructed a parallelogram of considerable size, which encroached upon the street remorselessly, according to the familiar uses of the edility of that period. The street was narrowed by a quarter by it, but then the house was enlarged by a half ; and was not that a sufficient compensation?

Tradition said that this house with the pointed gables was inhabited, in the time of Henry III., by a Councillor of state whom Queen Catherine came, some say to visit, and others to strangle. However that may be, the good lady must have stepped with a circumspect foot over the threshold of this building.

After the councillor had died—whether by strangulation or naturally is of no consequence,—the house had been sold, then abandoned, and lastly isolated from the other houses of the street. Towards the middle of the reign of Louis XIII. only, an Italian, named Cropoli, escaped from the kitchens of the Marquis d'Ancre, came and took possession of this house. There he established a little hostelry, in which was fabricated a macaroni so delicious that people came from miles round to fetch it or eat it.

So famous had the house become for it, that when Mary de Medici was a prisoner, as we know, in the castle of Blois, she once sent for some.

It was precisely on the day she had escaped by the famous window. The dish of macaroni was left upon the table, only just tasted by the royal mouth.

This double favour, of a strangulation and a macaroni, conferred upon the triangular house, gave poor Cropoli a fancy to grace his hostelry with a pompous title. But his quality of an Italian was no recommendation in these times, and his small, well-concealed fortune forbade attracting too much attention.

When he found himself about to die, which happened in 1643, just after the death of Louis XIII, he called to him his son, a young cook of great promise, and, with tears in his eyes, he recommended him to preserve carefully the secret of the macaroni, to Frenchify his name, and at length, when the political horizon should be cleared from the clouds which obscured it—this was practised then as in our day,—to order

of the nearest smith a handsome sign, upon which a famous painter, whom he named, should design two queens' portraits, with these words as a legend :—"TO THE MEDICI."

The worthy Cropoli, after these recommendations, had only sufficient time to point out to his young successor a chimney, under the slab of which he had hidden a thousand ten-franc louis, and then expired.

Cropoli the younger, like a man of good heart, supported the loss with resignation, and the gain without insolence. He began by accustoming the public to sound the final *i* of his name so little, that, by the aid of general complaisance, he was soon called nothing but M. Cropole, which is quite a French name. He then married, having had in his eye a little French girl, from whose parents he extorted a reasonable dowry by showing them what there was beneath the slab of the chimney.

These two points accomplished, he went in search of the painter who was to paint the sign ; and he was soon found. He was an old Italian, a rival of the Raphaels and the Caracchi, but an unfortunate rival. He said he was of the Venetian school, doubtless from his fondness for colour. His works, of which he had never sold one, attracted the eye at a distance of a hundred paces ; but they so formidably displeased the citizens, that he had finished by painting no more.

He boasted of having painted a bath-room for Madame la Maréchale d'Ancre, and moaned over this chamber having been burnt at the time of the maréchal's disaster.

Cropoli, in his character of a compatriot, was indulgent towards Pittrino, which was the name of the artist. Perhaps he had seen the famous pictures of the bath-room. Be this as it may, he held in such esteem, we may say in such friendship, the famous Pittrino, that he took him into his own house.

Pittrino, grateful, and fed with macaroni, set about propagating the reputation of this national dish, and from the time of its founder, he had rendered, with his indefatigable tongue, signal services to the house of Cropoli.

As he grew old he attached himself to the son as he had done to the father, and by degrees became a kind of overlooker of a house in which his remarkable integrity, his acknowledged sobriety, and a thousand other virtues useless to enumerate, gave him an eternal place by the fireside, with a right of inspection over the domestics. Besides this, it was he who tasted the macaroni, to maintain the pure flavour of the ancient tradition ; and it must be allowed that he never permitted a grain of pepper too much, or an atom of parmesan too little. His joy was at its height on that day when called upon to share the secret of Cropoli the younger, and to paint the famous sign.

He was seen at once rummaging with ardour in an old box, in which he found some pencils, a little gnawed by the rats, but still passable ; some colours in bladders, almost dried up ; some linseed-oil in a bottle, and a palette which had formerly belonged to Bronzino, that *dieu de la peinture*, as the ultramontane artist, in his ever young enthusiasm, always called him.

Pittrino was puffed up with all the joy of a rehabilitation.

He did as Raphael had done—he changed his style, and painted, in the fashion of the Albanian, two goddesses rather than two queens. These illustrious ladies appeared so lovely on the sign,—they presented to the astonished eyes such an assemblage of lilies and roses, the enchanting result of the change of style in Pittrino—they assumed the *poses* of sirens so Anacreontically—that the principal *échevin*, when admitted to

view this capital piece in the *salle* of Cropoli, at once declared that these ladies were too handsome, of too animated a beauty, to figure as a sign in the eyes of passengers.

To Pittrino he added, "His royal highness Monsieur, who often comes into our city, will not be much pleased to see his illustrious mother so slightly clothed, and he will send you to the *oubliettes* of the state ; for, remember, the heart of that glorious prince is not always tender. You must efface either the two sirens or the legend, without which I forbid the exhibition of the sign. I say this for your sake, Master Cropole, as well as for yours, Signor Pittrino."

What answer could be made to this ? It was necessary to thank the *échevin* for his kindness, which Cropole did. But Pittrino remained downcast and sad : he felt assured of what was about to happen.

The edile was scarcely gone when Cropole, crossing his arms, said : "Well, master, what is to be done ?"

"We must efface the legend," said Pittrino, in a melancholy tone. "I have some excellent ivory-black ; it will be done in a moment, and we will replace the Medici by the nymphs or the sirens, whichever you prefer."

"No," said Cropole, "the will of my father must be carried out. My father considered——"

"He considered the figures of the most importance," said Pittrino.

"He thought most of the legend," said Cropole.

"The proof of the importance in which he held the figures," said Pittrino, "is that he desired they should be likenesses, and they are so."

"Yes ; but if they had not been so, who would have recognised them without the legend ? At the present day even, when the memory of the Blaisois begins to be faint with regard to these two celebrated persons, who would recognise Catherine and Mary without the words '*To the Medici*' ?"

"But the figures ?" said Pittrino, in despair ; for he felt that young Cropole was right. "I should not like to lose the fruit of my labour."

"And I should not wish you to be thrown into prison, and myself into the *oubliettes*."

"Let us efface '*Medici*,'" said Pittrino supplicatingly.

"No," replied Cropole, firmly. "I have got an idea, a sublime idea—your picture shall appear, and my legend likewise. Does not '*Medici*' mean doctor, or physician, in Italian ?"

"Yes, in the plural."

"Well, then, you shall order another sign-frame of the smith ; you shall paint six physicians, and write underneath '*Aux Medici*,' which makes a very pretty play upon words."

"Six physicians ! impossible ! And the composition ?" cried Pittrino.

"That is your business—but so it shall be—I insist upon it—it must be so—my maccaroni is burning."

This reasoning was peremptory—Pittrino obeyed. He composed the sign of six physicians, with the legend ; the *échevin* applauded and authorised it.

The sign produced an extravagant success in the city, which proves that poetry has always been in the wrong before citizens, as Pittrino said.

Cropole, to make amends to his painter-in-ordinary, hung up the nymphs of the preceding sign in his bedroom, which made Madame Cropole blush every time she looked at it, when she was undressing at night.

This is the way in which the pointed-gable house got a sign ; and this

is how the hostelry of the Medici, making a fortune, was found to be enlarged by a quarter, as we have described. And this is how there was at Blois a hostelry of that name, and had for painter-in-ordinary Master Pittrino.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE UNKNOWN.

THUS founded and recommended by its sign, the hostelry of Master Cropole held its way steadily on towards a solid prosperity.

It was not an immense fortune that Cropole had in perspective ; but he might hope to double the thousand louis d'or left by his father, to make another thousand louis by the sale of his house and stock, and at length to live happily like a retired citizen.

Cropole was anxious for gain, and was half-crazy with joy at the news of the arrival of Louis XIV.

Himself, his wife, Pittrino, and two cooks, immediately laid hands upon all the inhabitants of the dovecot, the poultry-yard, and the rabbit-hutches ; so that as many lamentations and cries resounded in the yards of the hostelry of the Medici as were formerly heard in Rama.

Cropole had, at the time, but one single traveller in his house.

This was a man of scarcely thirty years of age, handsome, tall, austere, or rather melancholy, in all his gestures and looks.

He was dressed in black velvet with jet trimmings ; a white collar, as plain as that of the severest Puritan, set off the whiteness of his youthful neck ; a small dark-coloured moustache scarcely covered his curled, disdainful lip.

He spoke to people looking them full in the face, without affectation, it is true, but without scruple ; so that the brilliancy of his black eyes became so insupportable, that more than one look had sunk beneath his, like the weaker sword in a single combat.

At this time, in which men, all created equal by God, were divided, thanks to prejudices, into two distinct castes, the gentleman and the commoner, as they are really divided into two races, the black and the white, —at this time, we say, he whose portrait we have just sketched could not fail of being taken for a gentleman, and of the best class. To ascertain this, there was no necessity to consult anything but his hands, long, slender, and white, of which every muscle, every vein, became apparent through the skin at the least movement, and the phalanges reddened at the least crispation.

This gentleman, then, had arrived alone at Cropole's house. He had taken, without hesitation, without reflection even, the principal apartment which the *hôte* had pointed out to him with a rapacious aim, very praiseworthy, some will say, very reprehensible will say others, if they admit that Cropole was a physiognomist, and judged people at first sight.

This apartment was that which composed the whole front of the ancient triangular house ; a large *salon*, lighted by two windows on the first stage, a small chamber by the side of it, and another above it.

Now, from the time he had arrived this gentleman had scarcely touched any repast that had been served up to him in his chamber. He had spoken but two words to the host, to warn him that a traveller of the name of Parry would arrive, and to desire that, when he did, he should be shown up to him immediately.

He afterwards preserved so profound a silence, that Cropole was almost offended, so much did he prefer people who were good company.

This gentleman had risen early the morning of the day on which this history begins, and had placed himself at the window of his *salon*, seated upon the ledge, and leaning upon the rail of the balcony, gazing sadly but persistently on both sides of the street, watching, no doubt, for the arrival of the traveller he had mentioned to the host.

In this way he had seen the little *cortège* of Monsieur return from hunting, then had again partaken of the profound tranquillity of the street, absorbed in his own expectation.

All at once the movement of the poor going to the meadows, couriers setting out, washers of pavement, purveyors of the royal household, gabbling, scampering shopboys, chariots in motion, hair-dressers on the run, and pages toiling along,—this tumult and bustle had surprised him, but without his losing any of that impassible and supreme majesty which gives to the eagle and the lion that serene and contemptuous glance amidst the hurrahs and shouts of hunters or the curious.

Soon the cries of the victims slaughtered in the poultry-yard, the hasty steps of Madame Cropole up that little wooden staircase, so narrow and so sonorous ; the bounding pace of Pittirino, who only that morning was smoking at the door with all the phlegm of a Dutchman ; all this communicated something like agitation and surprise to the traveller.

As he was rising to make inquiries, the door of his chamber opened. The unknown concluded they were about to introduce the impatiently expected traveller, and made three precipitate steps to meet him.

But, instead of the person he expected, it was Master Cropole who appeared, and behind him, in the half-dark staircase, the pleasant face of Madame Cropole, rendered trivial by curiosity. She only gave one furtive glance at the handsome gentleman, and disappeared.

Cropole advanced, cap in hand, rather bent than bowing.

A gesture of the unknown interrogated him, without a word being pronounced.

"Monsieur," said Cropole, "I come to ask how---what ought I to say: your lordship, monsieur le comte, or monsieur le marquis?"

"Say *monsieur*, and speak quickly," replied the unknown, with that haughty accent which admits of neither discussion nor reply.

"I came, then, to inquire how monsieur had passed the night, and if monsieur intended to keep this apartment?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur, something has happened upon which we could not reckon."

"What?"

"His majesty Louis XIV. will enter our city to-day, and will remain here one day, perhaps two."

Great astonishment was painted on the countenance of the unknown.

"The king of France coming to Blois?"

"He is on the road, monsieur."

"Then there is the stronger reason for my remaining," said the unknown.

"Very well ; but will monsieur keep all the apartments?"

"I do not understand you. Why should I require less to-day than yesterday?"

"Because, monsieur, your lordship will permit me to say, yesterday I did not think proper, when you chose your lodging, to fix any price that might have made your lordship believe that I prejudged your resources whilst to-day——"

The unknown coloured ; the idea at once struck him that he was supposed to be poor, and was being insulted.

"Whilst to-day," replied he, coldly, "you do prejudice?"

"Monsieur, I am a well-meaning man, thank God ! and simple *hôtelier* as I am, there is in me the blood of a gentleman. My father was a servant and officer of the late Maréchal d'Ancre. God rest his soul !"

"I do not contest that point with you ; I only wish to know, and that quickly, to what your questions tend?"

"You are too reasonable, monsieur, not to comprehend that our city is small, that the court is about to invade it, that the houses will be overflowing with inhabitants, and that lodgings will consequently obtain considerable prices."

Again the unknown coloured. "Name your terms," said he.

"I name them with scruple, monsieur, because I seek an honest gain, and that I wish to carry on my business without being uncivil or extravagant in my demands. Now the room you occupy is considerable, and you are alone."

"That is my business."

"Oh ! certainly. I do not mean to turn monsieur out."

The blood rushed to the temples of the unknown ; he darted at poor Cropole, the descendant of one of the officers of the Maréchal d'Ancre, a glance that would have crushed him down to beneath that famous chimney-slab, if Cropole had not been nailed to the spot by the question of his own proper interests.

"Do you desire me to go ?" said he. "Explain yourself—but quickly."

"Monsieur, Monsieur, you do not understand me. It is very delicate—I know—that which I am doing. I express myself badly, or, perhaps, as monsieur is a foreigner, which I perceive by his accent——"

In fact, the unknown spoke with that slight defect which is the principal character of English accentuation, even among men who speak the French language with the greatest purity.

"As monsieur is a foreigner, I say, it is perhaps he who does not catch my exact meaning. I wish for monsieur to give up one or two of the apartments he occupies, which would diminish his expenses and ease my conscience. Indeed, it is hard to increase unreasonably the price of the chambers, when one has had the honour to let them at a reasonable price."

"How much does the hire amount to since yesterday?"

"Monsieur, to one louis, with refreshments and the charge for the horse."

"Very well ; and that of to-day?"

"Ah ! there is the difficulty. This is the day of the king's arrival ; if the court comes to sleep here, the charge of the day is reckoned. From that it results that three chambers, at two louis each, make six louis. Two louis monsieur, are not much ; but six louis make a great deal."

The unknown, from red, as we have seen him, became very pale.

He drew from his pocket, with heroic bravery, a purse embroidered with a coat-of-arms, which he carefully concealed in the hollow of his hand. This purse was of a thinness, a flabbiness, a hollowness, which did not escape the eye of Cropole.

The unknown emptied the purse into his hand. It contained three double louis, which amounted to the six louis demanded by the host.

But it was seven that Cropole had required.

He looked, therefore, at the unknown, as much as to say, "And then?"

"There remains one louis, does there not, master hôtelier?"

"Yes, monsieur, but——"

The unknown plunged his hand into the pocket of his *haut-de-chausses*, and emptied it. It contained a small pocket-book, a gold key, and some silver. With this change he made up a louis.

"Thank you, monsieur," said Cropole. "It now only remains for me to ask whether monsieur intends to occupy his apartments to-morrow, in which case I will reserve them for him; whereas, if monsieur does not mean to do so, I will promise them to some of the king's people who are coming."

"That is but right," said the unknown, after a long silence; "but as I have no more money, as you have seen, and as I yet must retain the apartments, you must either sell this diamond in the city, or hold it in pledge."

Cropole looked at the diamond so long, that the unknown said, hastily:

"I prefer your selling it, monsieur; for it is worth three hundred pistoles. A Jew—are there any Jews in Blois?—would give you two hundred or a hundred and fifty for it—take whatever may be offered for it, if it be no more than the price of your lodging. Begone!"

"Oh! monsieur," replied Cropole, ashamed of the sudden inferiority which the unknown retorted upon him by this noble and disinterested confidence, as well as by the unalterable patience opposed to so many suspicions and evasions. "Oh, monsieur, I hope people are not so dishonest at Blois as you seem to think; and that the diamond, being worth what you say——"

The unknown here again darted at Cropole one of his eloquent glances.

"I really do not understand diamonds, monsieur, I assure you," cried he.

"But the jewellers do. Ask them," said the unknown. "Now I believe our accounts are settled, are they not, monsieur l'hôte?"

"Yes, monsieur, and to my profound regret; for I fear I have offended monsieur."

"Not at all!" replied the unknown, with ineffable majesty.

"Or have appeared to be extortionate with a noble traveller. Consider, monsieur, the peculiarity of the case."

"Say no more about it, I desire; and leave me to myself."

Cropole bowed profoundly, and left the room with a stupefied air, which announced that he had a good heart, and felt genuine remorse.

The unknown himself shut the door after him, and, when left alone, looked mournfully at the bottom of the purse, from which he had taken a small silken bag containing the diamond, his last resource.

He dwelt likewise upon the emptiness of his pockets, turned over the papers in his pocket-book, and convinced himself of the state of absolute destitution in which he was about to be plunged.

He raised his eyes towards heaven, with a sublime emotion of despairing calmness, brushed off with his hand some drops of sweat which trickled over his noble brow, and then cast down upon the earth a look which just before had been impressed with almost divine majesty.

That the storm had passed far from him, perhaps he had prayed in the bottom of his soul.

He drew near to the window, resumed his place in the balcony, and remained there, motionless, annihilated, dead, till the moment when, the heavens beginning to darken, the first flambeaux traversed the embalmed street, and gave the signal for illumination to all the windows of the city.

## CHAPTER VII.

PARRY.

WHILST the unknown was viewing these lights with interest, and lending an ear to the various noises, Master Cropole entered his apartment, followed by two attendants, who laid the cloth for his meal.

The stranger did not pay them the least attention ; but Cropole approaching him respectfully, whispered, " Monsieur, the diamond has been valued."

" Ah !" said the traveller. " Well ?"

" Well, monsieur, the jeweller of S.A.R. gives two hundred and eighty pistoles for it."

" Have you them ?"

" I thought it best to take them, monsieur ; nevertheless, I made it a condition of the bargain, that if monsieur wished to keep his diamond, it should be held till monsieur was again in funds."

" Oh, no, not at all, I told you to sell it."

" Then I have obeyed, or nearly so, since, without having definitely sold it, I have touched the money."

" Pay yourself," added the unknown.

" I will do so, monsieur, since you so positively require it."

A sad smile passed over the lips of the gentleman.

" Place the money on that trunk," said he, turning round and pointing to the piece of furniture.

Cropole deposited a tolerably large bag as directed, after having taken from it the amount of his reckoning.

" Now," said he, " I hope monsieur will not give me the pain of not taking any supper. Dinner has already been refused ; this is affronting to the house of *les Medici*. Look, monsieur, the supper is on the table, and I venture to say that it is not a bad one."

The unknown asked for a glass of wine, broke off a morsel of bread, and did not stir from the window whilst he ate and drank.

Shortly after was heard a loud flourish of trumpets ; cries arose in the distance, a confused buzzing filled the lower part of the city, and the first distinct sound that struck the ears of the stranger was the tramp of advancing horses.

" The king ! the king !" repeated a noisy and eager crowd.

" The king !" cried Cropole, abandoning his guest and his ideas of delicacy to satisfy his curiosity.

With Cropole were mingled, and jostled, on the staircase, Madame Cropole, Pittrino, and the waiters and scullions.

The *cortège* advanced slowly, lighted by a thousand flambeaux, in the streets and from the windows.

After a company of musketeers, and a closely ranked troop of gentlemen, came the litter of monsieur le cardinal, drawn like a carriage by four black horses. The pages and people of the cardinal marched behind.

Next came the carriage of the queen-mother, with her maids of honour at the doors, her gentlemen on horseback at both sides.

The king then appeared, mounted upon a splendid horse of Saxon race, with a flowing mane. The young prince exhibited, when bowing to some windows from which issued the most animated acclamations, a noble and handsome countenance illumined by the flambeaux of his pages.

By the side of the king, though a little in the rear, the Prince de Condé, M. Dangeau, and twenty other courtiers, followed by their people and their baggage, closed this veritably triumphant march. The pomp was of a military character.

Some of the courtiers—the elder ones, for instance—wore travelling dresses; but all the rest were clothed in warlike panoply. Many wore the gorget and buff coat of the times of Henry IV. and Louis XIII.

When the king passed before him, the unknown, who had leant forward over the balcony to obtain a better view, and who had concealed his face by leaning on his arm, felt his heart swell and overflow with a bitter jealousy.

The noise of the trumpets excited him—the popular acclamations deafened him: for a moment he allowed his reason to be absorbed in this flood of lights, tumult, and brilliant images.

“He is a king!” murmured he, in an accent of despair.

Then, before he had recovered from his sombre reverie, all the noise, all the splendour, had passed away. At the angle of the street there remained nothing beneath the stranger but a few hoarse, discordant voices, shouting at intervals, “*Vive le Roi!*”

There remained likewise the six candles held by the inhabitants of the hostelry *des Medici*, that is to say, two for Cropole, two for Pittrino, and one for each scullion. Cropole never ceased repeating, “How good-looking the king is! How strongly he resembles his illustrious father!”

“A handsome likeness!” said Pittrino.

“And what a lofty carriage he has!” added Madame Cropole, already in promiscuous commentary with her neighbours of both sexes.

Cropole was feeding their gossip with his own personal remarks, without observing that an old man on foot, but leading a small Irish horse by the bridle, was endeavouring to penetrate the crowd of men and women which blocked up the entrance to the *Medici*. But at that moment the voice of the stranger was heard from the window.

“Make way, monsieur l’hôtelier, to the entrance of your house!”

Cropole turned round, and, on seeing the old man, cleared a passage for him.

The window was instantly closed.

Pittrino pointed out the way to the newly arrived guest, who entered without uttering a word.

The stranger waited for him on the landing; he opened his arms to the old man, and led him to a seat.

“Oh no, no, my lord!” said he, “Sit down in your presence?—never!”

“Parry,” cried the gentleman, “I beg you will; you come from England—you come so far. Ah! it is not for your age to undergo the fatigues my service requires. Rest yourself.”

“I have my reply to give your lordship, in the first place.”

“Parry, I conjure you tell me nothing; for if your news had been good, you would not have begun in such a manner; you go about, which proves that the news is bad.”

“My lord,” said the old man, “do not hasten to alarm yourself; all is not lost, I hope. You must employ energy, but more particularly resignation.”

“Parry,” said the young man, “I have reached this place through a thousand snares and after a thousand difficulties: can you doubt my energy? I have meditated this journey ten years, in spite of all counsels and all obstacles—have you faith in my perseverance? I have this even-

ing sold the last of my father's diamonds ; for I had nothing wherewith to pay for my lodgings, and my host was about to turn me out."

Parry made a gesture of indignation, to which the young man replied by a pressure of the hand and a smile.

"I have still two hundred and seventy-four pistoles left, and I feel myself rich. I do not despair, Parry ; have you faith in my resignation?"

The old man raised his trembling hands towards heaven.

"Let me know," said the stranger,—“disguise nothing from me—what has happened."

"My recital will be short, my lord ; but in the name of heaven do not tremble so."

"It is impatience, Parry. Come, what did the general say to you?"

"At first the general would not receive me."

"He took you for a spy?"

"Yes, my lord ; but I wrote him a letter."

"Well?"

"He received it, and read it, my lord."

"Did that letter thoroughly explain my position and my views?"

"Oh yes !" said Parry, with a sad smile ; "it painted your very thoughts faithfully."

"Well—then, Parry?"

"Then the general sent me back the letter by an aide-de-camp, informing me that if I were found the next day within the circumscription of his command, he would have me arrested."

"Arrested !" murmured the young man. "What ! arrest you, my most faithful servant?"

"Yes, my lord."

"And notwithstanding you had signed the name *Parry*?"

"To all my letters, my lord ; and the aide-de-camp had known me at St. James's, and at Whitehall too," added the old man with a sigh.

The young man leant forward, thoughtful and sad.

"Ay, that's what he did before his people," said he, endeavouring to cheat himself with hopes. "But, privately—between you and him—what did he do ? Answer !"

"Alas ! my lord, he sent to me four cavaliers, who gave me the horse with which you just now saw me come back. These cavaliers conducted me, in great haste, to the little port of Tenby, threw me rather than embarked me, into a fishing-boat, about to sail for Brittany, and here I am."

"Oh !" sighed the young man, clasping his neck convulsively with his hand, and with a sob. "Parry, is that all?—is that all?"

"Yes, my lord ; that is all."

After this brief reply ensued a long interval of silence, broken only by the convulsive beating of the heel of the young man on the floor.

The old man endeavoured to change the conversation ; it was leading to thoughts much too sinister.

"My lord," said he, "what is the meaning of all the noise which preceded me ? What are these people crying '*Vive le Roi* !' for ? What king do they mean ? and what are all these lights for ?"

"Ah ! Parry," replied the young man ironically, "don't you know that this is the king of France visiting his good city of Blois ? All those trumpets are his, all those gilded housings are his, all those gentlemen wear swords that are his. His mother precedes him in a carriage magnificently encrusted with silver and gold. Happy mother ! His minister heaps up millions, and conducts him to a rich bride. Then all these

people rejoice ; they love their king, they hail him with their acclamations, and they cry '*Vive le Roi ! Vive le Roi !*'"

"Well, well, my lord," said Parry, more uneasy at the turn the conversation had taken than at the other.

"You know," resumed the unknown, "that *my* mother and *my* sister, whilst all this is going on in honour of the king of France, have neither money nor bread ; you know that I myself shall be poor and degraded within a fortnight, when all Europe will become acquainted with what you have told me. Parry, are there not examples in which a man of my condition should himself——"

"My lord, in the name of Heaven——"

"You are right, Parry ; I am a coward, and if I do nothing for myself, what will God do ? No, no ; I have two arms, Parry, and I have a sword." And he struck his arm violently with his hand, and took down his sword, which hung against the wall.

"What are you going to do, my lord ?"

"What am I going to do, Parry ? What every one in my family does. My mother lives on public charity, my sister begs for my mother ; I have, somewhere or other, brothers who equally beg for themselves ; and I, the eldest, will go and do as all the rest do—I will go and ask charity !"

And at these words, which he finished sharply with a nervous and terrible laugh, the young man girded on his sword, took his hat from the trunk, fastened to his shoulder a black cloak, which he had worn during all his journey, and pressing the two hands of the old man, who watched his proceedings with a look of anxiety,—

"My good Parry," said he, "order a fire. Drink, eat, sleep, and be happy ; let us both be happy, my faithful friend, my only friend. We are rich, as rich as kings !"

He struck the bag of pistoles with his clenched hands as he spoke, and it fell heavily to the ground. He resumed that dismal laugh that had so alarmed Parry ; and whilst the whole household was screaming, singing, and preparing to instal the travellers who had been preceded by their lackeys, he glided out by the principal entrance into the street, where the old man, who had gone to the window, lost sight of him in a moment.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HIS MAJESTY KING LOUIS XIV. WAS AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-TWO.

It has been seen, by the account we have endeavoured to give of it, that the *entrée* of King Louis XIV. into the city of Blois had been noisy and brilliant : his young majesty had therefore appeared perfectly satisfied with it.

On arriving beneath the porch of the Castle of the States, the king met, surrounded by his guards and gentlemen, with S.A.R. the duke, Gaston of Orleans, whose physiognomy, naturally rather majestic, had borrowed on this solemn occasion a fresh lustre and a fresh dignity. On her part, Madame, dressed in her robes of ceremony, awaited, in the interior balcony, the entrance of her nephew. All the windows of the old castle, so deserted and dismal on ordinary days, were resplendent with ladies and lights.

It was then to the sound of drums, trumpets, and *vivats*, that the young king crossed the threshold of that castle in which, seventy-two years before, Henry III. had called in the aid of assassination and treachery to

keep upon his head and in his house a crown which was already slipping from his brow, to fall into another family.

All eyes, after having admired the young king, so handsome and so agreeable, sought for that other king of France, much otherwise king than the former, and so old, so pale, so bent, that people called him the Cardinal Mazarin.

Louis was at this time endowed with all the natural gifts which make the perfect gentleman: his eye was brilliant, mild, and of a clear azure blue. But the most skilful physiognomists, those divers into the soul, on fixing their looks upon it, if it had been possible for a subject to sustain the glance of the king,—the most skilful physiognomists, we say, would never have been able to fathom the depths of that abyss of mildness. It was with the eyes of the king as with the immense depth of the azure heavens, or with those more terrific, and almost as sublime, which the Mediterranean reveals under the keels of its ships in a clear summer day, a gigantic mirror in which heaven delights to reflect sometimes its stars, sometimes its storms.

The king was short of stature—he was scarcely five feet two inches; but his youth made up for this defect, set off likewise by great nobleness in all his movements, and by considerable address in all bodily exercises.

Certes, he was already quite a king, and it was a great thing to be a king in that period of traditional devotedness and respect; but as, up to that time, he had been but seldom and always but poorly shown to the people, as they to whom he was shown saw him by the side of his mother, a tall woman, and *monsieur le cardinal*, a man of commanding presence, many found him so little of a king as to say—"Why, the king is not so tall as *monsieur le cardinal*!"

Whatever may be thought of these physical observations, which were principally made in the capital, the young king was welcomed as a god by the inhabitants of Blois, and almost like a king by his uncle and aunt, *Monsieur* and *Madame*, the inhabitants of the castle.

It must, however, be allowed, that when he saw, in the hall of reception, chairs of equal height placed for himself, his mother, the cardinal, and his uncle and aunt, a disposition artfully concealed by the semicircular form of the assembly, Louis XIV. became red with anger, and looked around him to ascertain by the countenances of those that were present, if this humiliation had been prepared for him. But as he saw nothing upon the impassible visage of the cardinal, nothing on that of his mother, nothing on those of the assembly, he resigned himself, and sat down, taking care to be seated before anybody else.

The gentlemen and ladies were presented to their majesties and *monsieur le cardinal*.

The king remarked that his mother and he scarcely knew the names of any of the persons who were presented to them; whilst the cardinal, on the contrary, never failed, with an admirable memory and presence of mind, to talk to every one about his estates, his ancestors, or his children, some of whom he named, which enchanted those worthy country gentlemen, and confirmed them in the idea that he alone is truly king who knows his subjects, from the same reason that the sun has no rival, because the sun alone warms and lightens.

The study of the young king, which had begun a long time before, without anybody suspecting it, was continued then, and he looked around him attentively, to endeavour to make out something in the physiognomies which had at first appeared the most insignificant and trivial.

A collation was served. The king, without daring to call upon the hospitality of his uncle, had waited for it impatiently. This time, therefore, he had all the honours due, if not to his rank, at least to his appetite.

As to the cardinal, he contented himself with touching with his withered lips a *bouillon*, served in a gold cup. The all-powerful minister, who had taken her regency from the queen, and his royalty from the king, had not been able to take a good stomach from nature.

Anne of Austria, already suffering from the cancer, which six or eight years after caused her death, ate very little more than the cardinal.

For Monsieur, already puffed up with the great event which had taken place in his provincial life, he ate nothing whatever.

Madame alone, like a true Lorrainer, kept pace with his majesty : so that Louis XIV., who, without this partner, might have eaten nearly alone, was at first much pleased with his aunt, and afterwards with M. de Saint-Remy, her *maître d'hôtel*, who had really distinguished himself.

The collation over, at a sign of approbation from M. de Mazarin, the king arose, and, at the invitation of his aunt, walked about among the ranks of the assembly.

The ladies then observed—there are certain things for which women are as good observers at Blois as at Paris—the ladies then observed that Louis XIV. had a prompt and bold look, which premised a distinguished appreciator of beauty. The men, on their part, observed that the prince was proud and haughty, that he loved to look down those who fixed their eyes upon him too long or too earnestly, which gave presage of a master.

Louis XIV. had accomplished about a third of his review when his ears were struck with a word which his eminence pronounced whilst conversing with Monsieur.

This word was the name of a woman.

Scarcely had Louis XIV. heard this word than he heard, or rather listened to, nothing else ; and neglecting the arc of the circle which awaited his visit, his object seemed to be to come as quickly as possible to the extremity of the curve.

Monsieur, like a good courtier, was inquiring of Monsieur le Cardinal after the health of his nieces ; he regretted, he said, not having the pleasure of receiving them at the same time with their uncle ; they must certainly have grown in stature, beauty, and grace, as they had promised to do the last time Monsieur had seen them.

What had first struck the king was a certain contrast in the voices of the two interlocutors. The voice of Monsieur was calm and natural while he spoke thus : while that of M. de Mazarin jumped by a note and a half to reply above the diapason of his usual voice. It might have been said that he wished that voice to strike, at the end of the *salon*, any ear that was too distant.

"Monseigneur," replied he, "Mesdemoiselles de Mazarin have still to finish their education ; they have duties to fulfil, and a position to make. An abode in a young and brilliant court would dissipate them a little."

Louis, at this last sentence, smiled sadly. The court was young, it was true, but the avarice of the cardinal had taken good care that it should not be brilliant.

"You have nevertheless no intention," replied Monsieur, "to cloister them or make them *bourgeoises*?"

"Not at all," replied the cardinal, forcing his Italian pronunciation in such a manner as that, from soft and velvety as it was, it became sharp

and vibrating ; "not at all : I have a full and fixed intention to marry them, and that as well as I shall be able."

"Parties will not be wanting, monsieur le cardinal," replied Monsieur, with a *bonhomie* worthy of one tradesman congratulating another.

"I hope not, monseigneur, and with reason, as God has been pleased to give them grace, intelligence, and beauty."

During this conversation, Louis XIV., conducted by Madame, accomplished, as we have described, the circle of presentations.

"Mademoiselle Auricule," said the princess, presenting to his majesty a fat, fair girl of two-and-twenty, who at a village *fête* might have been taken for a peasant in Sunday finery,—"the daughter of my music-mistress."

The king smiled. Madame had never been able to extract four correct notes from either viol or harpsichord.

"Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais," continued Madame ; "a young lady of rank, and my good attendant."

This time it was not the king that smiled ; it was the young lady presented, because, for the first time in her life, she heard given to her by Madame, who generally showed no tendency to spoil her, such an honourable qualification.

Our old acquaintance Montalais, therefore, made his majesty a profound curtsy, the more respectful from the necessity she was under of concealing certain contractions of her laughing lips, which the king might not have attributed to their real cause.

It was just at this moment that the king caught the word which startled him.

"And the name of the third?" asked Monsieur.

"Mary, monseigneur," replied the cardinal.

There was doubtless some magical influence in that word, for, as we have said, the king started at hearing it, and drew Madame towards the middle of the circle, as if he wished to put some confidential question to her, but, in reality, for the sake of getting nearer to the cardinal.

"Madame, my aunt," said he, laughing, and in a suppressed voice, "my geography master did not teach me that Blois was at such an immense distance from Paris."

"What do you mean, nephew?" asked Madame.

"Why, because it would appear that it requires several years, as regards fashions, to travel the distance!—Look at those young ladies!"

"Well ; I know them all."

"Some of them are pretty."

"Don't say that too loud, monsieur, my nephew ; you will drive them wild."

"Stop a bit, stop a bit, dear aunt!" said the king, smiling ; "for the second part of my sentence will serve as a corrective to the first. Well, my dear aunt, some of them appear old and others ugly, thanks to their ten-year-old fashions."

"But, sire, Blois is only five days' journey from Paris."

"Yes, that is it," said the king : "two years behind for each day."

"Indeed ! do you really think so? Well, that is strange ! It never struck me."

"Now, look, aunt," said Louis XIV., drawing still nearer to Mazarin, under the pretext of gaining a better point of view, "look at that simple white dress by the side of those antiquated specimens of finery, and those pretentious coiffures. She is probably one of my mother's maids of honour, though I don't know her."

"Ah! ah! my dear nephew!" replied Madame, laughing; "permit me to tell you that your divinatory science is at fault for once. The young lady you honour with your praise is not a Parisian, but a Blaisoise."

"Oh, aunt!" replied the king, with a look of doubt.

"Come here, Louise," said Madame

And the fair girl, already known to you under that name, approached them, timid and blushing, and almost bent beneath the royal glance.

"Mademoiselle Louise Françoise de la Beaume Leblanc, daughter of the Marquis de la Vallière," said Madame, ceremoniously

The young girl bowed with so much grace, mingled with the profound timidity inspired by the presence of the king, that the latter lost, while looking at her, a few words of the conversation of Monsieur and the cardinal.

"Daughter-in-law," continued Madame, "of M de Saint-Remy, my *maître d'hôtel*, who presided over the confection of that excellent *daube truffée* which your majesty seemed so much to appreciate."

No grace, no youth, no beauty, could stand out against such a presentation. The king smiled. Whether the words of Madame were a pleasantry, or uttered in all innocence, they proved the pitiless immolation of everything that Louis had found charming or poetic in the young girl. Mademoiselle de la Vallière, for Madame, and by rebound, for the king, was, for a moment, no more than the daughter of a man of a superior talent over *dînes truffées*

But princes are thus constituted. The gods, too, were just like this in Olympus. Diana and Venus, no doubt, abused the beautiful Alcmena and poor Io, when they descended, for distraction's sake, to speak, amidst nectar and ambrosia, of mortal beauties at the table of Jupiter.

Fortunately, Louise was so bent in her reverential salute, that she did not catch either Madame's words or the king's smile. In fact, if the poor child, who had so much good taste as alone to have chosen to dress herself in white amidst all her companions,—if that dove's heart, so easily accessible to painful emotions, had been touched by the cruel words of Madame, or the egotistical cold smile of the king, it would have annihilated her.

And Montalais herself, the girl of ingenious ideas, would not have attempted to recall her to life; for ridicule kills beauty even.

But fortunately, as we have said, Louise, whose ears were buzzing, and her eyes veiled by timidity,—Louise saw nothing and heard nothing; and the king, who had still his attention directed to the conversation of the cardinal and his uncle, hastened to return to them.

He came up just at the moment Mazarin terminated by saying: "Mary, as well as her sisters, has just set off for Brouage. I make them follow the opposite bank of the Loire to that along which we have travelled; and if I calculate their progress correctly, according to the orders I have given, they will to-morrow be opposite Blois."

These words were pronounced with that tact—that measure, that distinctness of tone, of intention, and reach—which made *del Signor Giulio Mazarini* the first comedian in the world.

It resulted that they went straight to the heart of Louis XIV., and that the cardinal, on turning round at the simple noise of the approaching footsteps of his majesty, saw the immediate effect of them upon the countenance of his pupil, an effect betrayed to the keen eyes of his eminence by a slight increase of colour. But what was the ventilating of such a secret to him whose craft had for twenty years deceived all the diplomatists of Europe!

From the moment the young king heard these last words, he appeared as if he had received a poisoned arrow in his heart. He could not remain quiet in a place, but cast around an uncertain, dead, and aimless look over the assembly. He with his eyes interrogated his mother more than twenty times : but she, given up to the pleasure of conversing with her sister-in-law, and likewise constrained by the glance of Mazarin, did not appear to comprehend any of the supplications conveyed by the looks of her son.

From this moment, music, lights, flowers, beauties, all became odious and insipid to Louis XIV. After he had a hundred times bitten his lips, stretched his legs and his arms like a well brought-up child, who, without daring to gape, exhausts all the modes of evincing his weariness—after having uselessly again implored his mother and the minister, he turned a despairing look towards the door, that is to say, towards liberty.

At this door, in the embrasure of which he was leaning, he saw, standing out strongly, a figure with a brown and lofty countenance, an aquiline nose, a stern but brilliant eye, grey and long hair, a black moustache, the true type of military beauty, whose gorget, more sparkling than a mirror, broke all the reflected lights which concentrated upon it, and sent them back as lightning. This officer wore his grey hat with its long red plumes upon his head, a proof that he was called there by his duty, and not by his pleasure. If he had been brought thither by his pleasure—if he had been a courtier instead of a soldier, as pleasure must always be paid for at the same price—he would have held his hat in his hand.

That which proved still better that this officer was upon duty, and was accomplishing a task to which he was accustomed, was, that he watched, with folded arms, remarkable indifference, and supreme apathy, the joys and *ennuis* of this *fête*. Above all, he appeared, like a philosopher, and all old soldiers are philosophers,—he appeared above all to comprehend the *ennuis* infinitely better than the joys ; but in the one he took his part, knowing very well how to do without the other.

Now, he was leaning, as we have said, against the carved door-frame when the melancholy, weary eyes of the king, by chance, met his.

It was not the first time, as it appeared, that the eyes of the officer had met those eyes, and he was perfectly acquainted with the expression of them ; for, as soon as he had cast his own look upon the countenance of Louis XIV, and had read by it what was passing in his heart—that is to say, all the *ennui* that oppressed him,—all the timid desire to go out which agitated him,—he perceived he must render the king a service without his commanding it,—almost in spite of himself. Boldly, therefore, as if he had given the word of command to cavalry in battle, “On the king’s service !” cried he, in a clear, sonorous voice.

At these words, which produced the effect of a peal of thunder, prevailing over the orchestra, the singing, and the buzz of the promenaders, the cardinal and the queen-mother looked at each other with surprise.

Louis XIV., pale, but resolved, supported as he was by that intuition of his own thought which he had found in the mind of the officer of musketeers, and which he had just manifested by the order given, arose from his chair, and took a step towards the door.

“Are you going, my son ?” said the queen, whilst Mazarin satisfied himself with interrogating by a look which might have appeared mild if it had not been so piercing.

“Yes, madame,” replied the king ; “I am fatigued, and, besides, wish to write this evening.”

A smile stole over the lips of the minister, who appeared, by a bend of the head, to give the king permission.

Monsieur and Madame hastened to give orders to the officers who presented themselves.

The king bowed, crossed the hall, and gained the door, where a hedge of twenty musketeers awaited him. At the extremity of this hedge stood the officer, impassible, with his drawn sword in his hand. The king passed, and all the crowd stood on tip-toe, to have one more look at him.

Ten musketeers, opening the crowd of the antechambers and the steps, made way for his majesty. The other ten surrounded the king and Monsieur, who had insisted upon accompanying his majesty. The domestics walked behind. This little *cortège* escorted the king to the chamber destined for him. The apartment was the same that had been occupied by Henry III. during his sojourn in the States

Monsieur had given his orders. The musketeers, led by their officer, took possession of the little passage by which one wing of the castle communicates with the other.—This passage was commenced by a small square ante-chamber, dark even in the finest days. Monsieur stopped Louis XIV.

"You are passing now, sire," said he, "the very spot where the Duc de Guise received the first stab of the poniard."

The king was ignorant of all historical matters ; he had heard of the fact, but he knew nothing of the localities or the details.

"Ah !" said he with a shudder.

And he stopped. The rest, both behind him and before him, stopped likewise.

"The duc, sire," continued Gaston, "was nearly where I stand ; he was walking in the same direction as your majesty ; M. de Lorgnes was exactly where your lieutenant of musketeers is ; M. de Saint-Maline and his majesty's ordinaries were behind him and around him. It was here that he was struck."

The king turned towards his officer, and saw something like a cloud pass over his martial and daring countenance.

"Yes, from behind !" murmured the lieutenant, with a gesture of supreme disdain. And he endeavoured to resume the march, as if ill at ease at being between walls formerly defiled by treachery

But the king, who appeared to wish to be informed, was disposed to give another look at this dismal spot.

Gaston perceived his nephew's desire.

"Look, sire," said he, taking a flambeau from the hands of M. de Saint-Remy, "this is where he fell. There was a bed there, the curtains of which he tore with catching at them."

"Why does the floor seem hollowed out at this spot ?" asked Louis.

"Because it was here the blood flowed," replied Gaston ; "the blood penetrated deeply into the oak, and it was only by cutting it out that they succeeded in making it disappear. And even then," added Gaston, pointing the flambeau to the spot, "even then this red stain resisted all the attempts made to destroy it."

Louis XIV. raised his head. Perhaps he was thinking of that bloody trace that had once been shown him at the Louvre, and which, as a pendant to that of Blois, had been made there one day by the king his father with the blood of Concini.

"Let us go on," said he.

The march was resumed promptly ; for emotion, no doubt, had given to the voice of the young prince a tone of command which was not customary.

with him. When arrived at the apartment destined for the king, which communicated not only with the little passage we have passed through, but further with the great staircase leading to the court,--

"Will your majesty," said Gaston, "condescend to occupy this apartment, all unworthy as it is to receive you?"

"Uncle," replied the young king, "I render you my thanks for your cordial hospitality."

Gaston bowed to his nephew, who embraced him, and then went out.

Of the twenty musketeers who had accompanied the king, ten reconducted Monsieur to the reception-rooms, which were not yet empty, notwithstanding the king had retired.

The ten others were posted by their officer, who himself explored, in five minutes, all the localities, with that cold and certain glance which not even habit gives unless that glance belong to genius.

Then, when all were placed, he chose as his head-quarters the antechamber, in which he found a large *fauteuil*, a lamp, some wine, some water, and some dry bread.

He refreshed his lamp, drank half a glass of wine, curled his lip with a smile full of expression, installed himself in his large arm-chair, and made preparations for sleeping.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH THE UNKNOWN OF THE HOSTELRY OF LES MEDICI LOSES HIS INCOGNITO.

THIS officer, who was sleeping, or preparing to sleep, was, notwithstanding his careless air, charged with a serious responsibility.

Lieutenant of the king's musketeers, he commanded all the company which came from Paris, and that company consisted of a hundred and twenty men; but, with the exception of the twenty of whom we have spoken, the other hundred were engaged in guarding the queen-mother, and more particularly the cardinal.

Monsignor Giulio Mazarini economized the travelling expenses of his guards; he consequently used the king's, and that largely, since he took fifty of them for himself—a peculiarity which would not have failed to strike any one unacquainted with the usages of that court.

That which would not, still further, have appeared, if not inconvenient, at least extraordinary, to a stranger, was, that the side of the castle destined for Monsieur le Cardinal was brilliant, light, and cheerful. The musketeers there mounted guard before every door, and allowed no one to enter, except the couriers, who, even while he was travelling, followed the cardinal for the carrying on of his correspondence.

Twenty men were on duty with the queen-mother; thirty rested, in order to relieve their companions the next day.

On the king's side, on the contrary, were darkness, silence, and solitude. When once the doors were closed, there was no longer an appearance of royalty. All the servitors had by degrees retired. Monsieur le prince had sent to know if his majesty required his attendance; and on the customary "No" of the lieutenant of musketeers, who was habituated to the question and the reply, all appeared to sink into the arms of sleep, as if in the dwelling of a good citizen.

And yet it was possible to hear from the side of the house occupied by the young king the music of the banquet, and to see the windows of the great hall richly illuminated.

Ten minutes after his installation in his apartment, Louis XIV had been able to learn, by a movement much more distinguished than marked his own leaving, the departure of the cardinal, who, in his turn, sought his bedroom, accompanied by a large escort of ladies and gentlemen.

Besides, to perceive this movement, he had nothing to do but to look out at his window, the shutters of which had not been closed.

His eminence crossed the court, conducted by Monsieur, who himself held a flambeau ; then followed the queen-mother, to whom Madame familiarly gave her arm ; and both walked chatting away, like two old friends.

Behind these two couples filed nobles, ladies, pages and officers ; flambeaux gleamed over the whole court, like the moving reflections of a conflagration. Then the noise of steps and voices became lost in the upper floors of the castle.

No one was then thinking of the king, who, leaning on his elbow at his window, had sadly seen pass away all that light, and heard that noise die off—no, not one, if it was not that unknown of the hostelry *des Meduci*, whom we have seen go out, enveloped in his cloak.

He had come straight up to the castle, and had, with his melancholy countenance, wandered round and round the palace, from which the people had not yet departed ; and finding that no one guarded the great entrance, or the porch, seeing that the soldiers of Monsieur were fraternising with the royal soldiers—that is to say, swallowing Beaugency at discretion, or rather indiscretion—the unknown penetrated through the crowd, then ascended to the court, and came to the landing of the staircase leading to the cardinal's apartment.

What, according to all probability, induced him to direct his steps that way, was the splendour of the flambeaux, and the busy air of the pages and domestics. But he was stopped short by a presented musket and the cry of the sentinel.

"Where are you going, my friend?" asked the soldier.

"I am going to the king's apartment," replied the unknown, haughtily, but tranquilly.

The soldier called one of his eminence's officers, who, in the tone in which a youth in office directs a solicitor to a minister, let fall these words : "The other staircase, in front."

And the officer, without further notice of the unknown, resumed his interrupted conversation.

The stranger, without reply, directed his steps towards the staircase pointed out to him. On this side there was no noise, there were no more flambeaux.

Obscurity, through which a sentinel glided like a shadow ; silence, which permitted him to hear the sound of his own footsteps, accompanied with the jingling of his spurs upon the stone slabs.

This guard was one of the twenty musketeers appointed for attendance upon the king, and who mounted guard with the stiffness and consciousness of a statue.

"Who goes there?" said the guard.

"A friend," replied the unknown.

"What do you want?"

"To speak to the king."

"Do you, my dear monsieur? That's not very likely."

"Why not?"

"Because the king is gone to bed."

"Gone to bed already?"—"Yes."

"No matter ; I must speak to him."

"And I tell you that is impossible."

"And yet——"

"Go back !"

"Do you require the word ?"

"I have no account to render to you. Stand back !"

And this time the soldier accompanied his word with a threatening gesture ; but the unknown stirred no more than if his feet had taken root.

"Monsieur le mousquetaire," said he, "are you a gentleman ?"

"I have that honour."

"Very well ! I also am one ; and between gentlemen some consideration ought to be observed."

The soldier lowered his arms, overcome by the dignity with which these words were pronounced.

"Speak, monsieur," said he ; "and if you ask me anything in my power——"

"Thank you. You have an officer, have you not ?"

"Our lieutenant ? Yes, monsieur."

"Well, I wish to speak to him."

"Oh, that's a different thing. Come up, monsieur."

The unknown saluted the soldier in a lofty fashion, and ascended the staircase ; whilst the cry, "Lieutenant, a visit !" transmitted from sentinel to sentinel, preceded the unknown, and disturbed the slumbers of the officer.

Dragging on his boot, rubbing his eyes, and hooking his cloak, the lieutenant made three steps towards the stranger.

"What can I do to serve you, monsieur ?" asked he.

"You are the officer on duty, lieutenant of the musketeers, are you ?"

"I have that honour," replied the officer.

"Monsieur, I must absolutely speak to the king."

The lieutenant looked attentively at the unknown, and in that look, however rapid, he saw all he wished to see—that is to say, a person of high distinction in an ordinary dress.

"I do not suppose you to be mad," replied he ; "and yet you seem to me to be in a condition to know, monsieur, that people do not enter a king's apartments in this manner without his consent."

"He will consent."

"Monsieur, permit me to doubt that. The king has retired this quarter of an hour ; he must be now undressing. Besides, the word is given."

"When he knows who I am, he will recall the word."

The officer was more and more surprised, more and more subdued.

"If I consent to announce you, may I at least know whom to announce, monsieur ?"

"You will announce his Majesty Charles II., King of England, Scotland, and Ireland."

The officer uttered a cry of astonishment, drew back, and there might be seen upon his pallid countenance one of the most poignant emotions that ever an energetic man endeavoured to drive back to his heart.

"Oh, yes, sire ; in fact," said he, "I ought to have recognised you."

"You have seen my portrait, then ?"

"No, sire."

"Or else you have seen me formerly at court, before I was driven from France ?"

"No, sire, it is not even that."

"How, then, could you have recognised me, if you have never seen my portrait or my person?"

"Sire, I saw his majesty your father at a terrible moment."

"The day——"

"Yes."

A dark cloud passed over the brow of the prince; then, dashing his hand across it, "Do you still see any difficulty in announcing me?" said he.

"Sire, pardon me," replied the officer, "but I could not imagine a king under so simple an exterior; and yet I had the honour to tell your majesty just now that I had seen Charles I. But pardon me, monsieur; I will go and inform the king."

But returning after going a few steps, "Your majesty is desirous, without doubt, that this interview should be a secret?" said he.

"I do not require it; but if it were possible to preserve it——"

"It is possible, sire, for I can dispense with informing the first gentleman on duty; but, for that, your majesty must please to consent to give up your sword."

"True, true; I had forgotten that no one armed is permitted to enter the chamber of a king of France."

"Your majesty will form an exception, if you wish it; but then I shall avoid my responsibility by informing the king's attendant."

"Here is my sword, monsieur. Will you now please to announce me to his majesty?"

"Instantly, sire." And the officer immediately went and knocked at the door of communication, which the valet opened to him.

"His Majesty the King of England!" said the officer.

"His Majesty the King of England!" replied the *valet-de-chambre*.

At these words a gentleman opened the folding doors of the king's apartment, and Louis XIV. was seen, without hat or sword, and his *pourpoint* open, advancing with signs of the greatest surprise.

"You, my brother—you at Blois!" cried Louis XIV., dismissing with a gesture both the gentleman and the *valet-de-chambre*, who passed out into the next apartment.

"Sire," replied Charles II., "I was going to Paris, in the hope of seeing your majesty, when report informed me of your approaching arrival in this city. I therefore prolonged my abode here, having something very particular to communicate to you."

"Will this closet suit you, my brother?"

"Perfectly well, sire; for I think no one can hear us here."

"I have dismissed my gentleman and my watcher; they are in the next chamber. There, behind that partition, is a solitary closet, looking into the antechamber, and in that antechamber you found nobody but a solitary officer, did you?"

"No, sire."

"Well, then, speak, my brother; I listen to you."

"Sire, I commence, and entreat your majesty to have pity on the misfortunes of our house."

The King of France coloured, and drew his chair closer to that of the King of England.

"Sire," said Charles II., "I have no need to ask if your majesty is acquainted with the details of my deplorable history."

Louis XIV. blushed this time more strongly than before; then, stretching forth his hand to that of the King of England, "My brother," said he, "I am ashamed to say so, but the cardinal scarcely ever speaks of politics."

affairs before me. Still more, formerly I used to get Laporte, my *valet-de-chambre*, to read historical subjects to me ; but he put a stop to these readings, and took away Laporte from me. So that I beg my brother Charles to tell me all those matters as to a man who knows nothing."

"Well, sire, I think that by taking things from the beginning I shall have a better chance of touching the heart of your majesty."

"Speak on, my brother, speak on."

"You know, sire, that, being called in 1650 to Edinburgh, during Cromwell's expedition into Ireland, I was crowned at Scone. A year after, wounded in one of the provinces he had usurped, Cromwell returned upon us. To meet him was my object ; to leave Scotland was my wish."

"And yet," interrupted the young king, "Scotland is almost your native country, is it not, my brother?"

"Yes ; but the Scots were cruel compatriots for me, sire : they had forced me to forsake the religion of my fathers ; they had hung Lord Montrose, the most devoted of my servants, because he was not a Covenanter ; and as the poor martyr, to whom they had offered a favour when d<sup>e</sup> in<sup>s</sup>, had asked that his body might be cut into as many pieces as there are cities in Scotland, in order that evidence of his fidelity might be met with everywhere, I could not leave one city, or go into another, without passing under some fragments of a body which had acted, fought, and breathed for me.

"By a bold, almost desperate march, I passed through Cromwell's army, and entered England. The Protector set out in pursuit of this strange flight, which had a crown for its object. If I had been able to reach London before him, without doubt the prize of the race would have been mine ; but he overtook me at Worcester.

"The genius of England was no longer with us, but with him. On the 5th of September, 1651, sire, the anniversary of the other battle of Dunbar, so fatal to the Scots, I was conquered. Two thousand men fell around me before I thought of retreating a step. At length I was obliged to fly.

"From that moment my history became a romance. Pursued with persistent inveteracy, I cut off my hair, I disguised myself as a woodman. One day spent an i<sup>st</sup> the branches of an oak gave to that tree the name of the royal oak, which it bears to this day. My adventures in the county of Stafford, whence I escaped with the daughter of my host on a pillion behind me, still fill the tales of the country firesides, and would furnish matter for ballads. I will some day write all this, sire, for the instruction of my brother kings.

"I will first tell how, on arriving at the residence of Mr. Norton, I met with a court chaplain, who was looking on at a party playing at skittles, and an old servant who named me, bursting into tears, and who was as near and as certainly killing me by his fidelity as another might have been by treachery. Then I will tell of my terrors—yes, sire, of my terrors—when, at the house of Colonel Windham, a farrier who came to shoe our horses declared they had been shod in the north."

"How strange !" murmured Louis XIV. "I never heard anything of all that ; I was only told of your embarkation at Brighthelmstone and your landing in Normandy."

"Oh !" exclaimed Charles, "if Heaven permits kings to be thus ignorant of the histories of each other, how can they render assistance to their brothers who need it?"

"But tell me," continued Louis XIV., "how, after being so roughly received in England, you can still hope for anything from that unhappy country and that rebellious people?"

"Oh, sire ! since the battle of Worcester, everything is changed there. Cromwell is dead, after having signed a treaty with France, in which his name was placed above yours. He died on the 5th of September, 1658, a fresh anniversary of the battles of Dünbar and Worcester."

"His son has succeeded him."

"But certain men have a family, sire, and no heir. The inheritance of Oliver was too heavy for Richard. Richard was neither a republican nor a royalist ; Richard allowed his guards to eat his dinner, and his generals to govern the republic ; Richard abdicated the protectorate on the 22nd of April, 1659, more than a year ago, sire."

"From that time England is nothing but a tennis-court, in which the players throw dice for the crown of my father. The two most eager players are Lambert and Monk. Well, sire, I, in my turn, wish to take part in this game, where the stakes are thrown upon my royal mantle. Sire, it only requires a million to corrupt one of these players and make an ally of him, or two hundred of your gentlemen to drive them out of my palace at Whitehall, as Christ drove the money changers from the temple."

"You come, then," replied Louis XIV., "to ask me——"

"For your assistance ; that is to say, not only for that which kings owe to each other, but that which simple Christians owe to each other,—your assistance, sire, either in money or men. Your assistance, sire, and within a month, whether I oppose Lambert to Monk, or Monk to Lambert, I shall have re-conquered my paternal inheritance, without having cost my country a guinea, or my subjects a drop of blood, for they are now all drunk with revolutions, protectorates, and republics, and ask nothing better than to fall staggering to sleep in the arms of royalty. Your assistance, sire, and I shall owe you more than I owe my father—my poor father, who bought at so dear a rate the ruin of our house ! You may judge, sire, whether I am unhappy, whether I am in despair, for I accuse my own father !"

And the blood mounted to the pale face of Charles II., who remained for an instant with his head between his hands, and as if blinded by that blood which appeared to revolt against the filial blasphemy.

The young king was not less affected than his elder brother ; he threw himself about in his *fauteuil*, and could not find a single word of reply.

Charles II., to whom ten years in age gave a superior strength to master his emotions, recovered his speech the first.

"Sire," said he, "your reply ? I wait for it as a criminal waits for his sentence. Must I die ?"

"My brother," replied the French prince, "you ask me for a million—me, who was never possessed of a quarter of that sum ! I possess nothing I am no more king of France than you are king of England. I am a name, a cipher dressed in *fleur-de-lised* velvet,—that is all. I am upon a visible throne ; that is my only advantage over your majesty. I have nothing—I can do nothing."

"Can it be so ?" exclaimed Charles II.

"My brother," said Louis, sinking his voice, "I have undergone miseries with which my poorest gentlemen are unacquainted. If my poor Laporte were here, he would tell you that I have slept in ragged sheets, through the holes of which my legs have passed ; he would tell you that afterwards, when I asked for carriages, they brought me conveyances half-destroyed by the rats of the coach-houses ; he would tell you that when I asked for my dinner, the servants went to the cardinal's kitchen to inquire if there were any dinner for the king. And look ! to-day, this very day even, when I am twenty-two years of age,—to-day, when I have attained the

grade of the majority of kings,—to-day, when I ought to have the key of the treasury, the direction of policy, the supremacy in peace and war,—cast your eyes around me, see how I am left! Look at this abandonment—this disdain—this silence! Whilst yonder—look yonder! View the bustle, the lights, the homage! There!—there you see the real king of France, my brother!”

“In the cardinal’s apartments?”

“Yes, in the cardinal’s apartments.”

“Then I am condemned, sire?”

Louis XIV. made no reply.

“Condemned is the word; for I will never solicit him who left my mother and sister to die with cold and hunger—the daughter and granddaughter of Henry IV.—if M. de Retz and the parliament had not sent them wood and bread.”

“To die?” murmured Louis XIV.

“Well!” continued the king of England, “poor Charles II., grandson of Henry IV., as you are, sire, having neither parliament nor Cardinal de Retz to apply to, will die of hunger, as his mother and sister had nearly done.”

Louis knitted his brow, and twisted violently the lace of his ruffles.

This prostration, this immobility, serving as a mark to an emotion so visible, struck Charles II., and he took the young man’s hand.

“Thanks!” said he, “my brother. You pity me, and that is all I can require of you in your present situation.”

“Sire,” said Louis XIV., with a sudden impulse, and raising his head, “it is a million you require, or two hundred gentlemen, I think you say?”

“Sire, a million would be quite sufficient.”

“That is very little.”

“Offered to a single man it is a great deal. Convictions have been purchased at a much lower price; and I should have nothing to do but with venalities.”

“Two hundred gentlemen! Reflect!—that is little more than a single company.”

“Sire, there is in our family a tradition, and that is, that four men, four French gentlemen, devoted to my father, were near saving my father, though condemned by a parliament, guarded by an army, and surrounded by a nation.”

“Then if I can procure you a million, or two hundred gentlemen, you will be satisfied; and you will consider me your well-affectioned brother?”

“I shall consider you as my saviour; and if I recover the throne of my father, England will be, as long as I reign at least, a sister to France, as you will have been a brother to me.”

“Well, my brother,” said Louis, rising, “what you hesitate to ask for, I will myself demand; that which I have never done on my own account, I will do on yours. I will go and find the king of France—the other—the rich, the powerful one, I mean. I will myself solicit this million, or these two hundred gentlemen; and—we will see.”

“Oh!” cried Charles, “you are a noble friend, sire—a heart created by God! You save me, my brother; and if you should ever stand in need of the life you restore me, demand it.”

“Silence, my brother,—silence!” said Louis, in a suppressed voice. “Take care that no one hears you! We have not obtained our end yet. To ask money of Mazarin—that is worse than traversing the enchanted forest, each tree of which enclosed a demon. It is more than setting out to conquer a world.”

"But yet sire, when you ask it——"

"I have already told you that I never asked," replied Louis, with a haughtiness that made the king of England turn pale.

And as the latter, like a wounded man, made a retreating movement—"Pardon me, my brother," replied he. "I have neither a mother nor a sister who are suffering. My throne is hard and naked, but I am firmly seated on my throne. Pardon me that expression, my brother; it was that of an egotist. I will retract it, therefore, by a sacrifice,—I will go to monsieur le cardinal. Wait for me, if you please—I will return."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ARITHMETIC OF M. DE MAZARIN.

WHILST the king was directing his course rapidly towards the wing of the castle occupied by the cardinal, taking nobody with him but his *valet-de-chambre*, the officer of musketeers came out, breathing like a man who has for a long time been forced to hold his breath, from the little cabinet of which we have already spoken, and which the king believed to be quite solitary. This little cabinet had formerly been part of the chamber, from which it was only separated by a thin partition. It resulted that this partition, which was only for the eye, permitted the ear the least indiscreet to hear every word spoken in the chamber.

There was no doubt, then, that this lieutenant of musketeers had heard all that had passed in his majesty's apartment.

Warned by the last words of the young king, he came out just in time to salute him on his passage, and to follow him with his eyes till he had disappeared in the corridor.

Then, as soon as he had disappeared, he shook his head after a fashion peculiarly his own, and in a voice which forty years' absence from Gascony had not deprived of its Gascon accent, "A melancholy service," said he, "and a melancholy master!"

These words pronounced, the lieutenant resumed his place in his *fauteuil*, stretched his legs, and closed his eyes, like a man who either sleeps or meditates.

During this short monologue and the *mise-en-scène* that had accompanied it, whilst the king, through the long corridors of the old castle, proceeded to the apartments of M. de Mazarin, a scene of another sort was being enacted in those apartments.

Mazarin was in bed, suffering a little from the gout. But as he was a man of order, who utilised even pain, he forced his wakefulness to be the humble servant of his labour. He had consequently ordered Bernouin, his *valet-de-chambre*, to bring him a little travelling-desk, so that he might write in bed. But the gout is not an adversary that allows itself to be conquered so easily; therefore, at each movement he made, the pain from dull became sharp.

"Is Brienne there?" asked he of Bernouin.

"No, monseigneur," replied the *valet-de-chambre*; "M. de Brienne, with your permission, is gone to bed. But, if it is the wish of your eminence, he can speedily be called."

"No; it is not worth while. Let us see, however. Cursed ciphers!"

And the cardinal began to think, counting on his fingers the while.

"Oh! ciphers is it?" said Bernouin. "Very well! if your eminence

attempts calculations, I will promise you a pretty headache to-morrow. And with that please to remember M. Guénaud is not here."

"You are right, Bernouin. You must take Brienne's place, my friend. Indeed, I ought to have brought M. Colbert with me. That young man goes on very well, Bernouin, very well; a very orderly youth."

"I do not know," said the *valet-de-chambre*, "but I don't like the countenance of your young man who goes on so well."

"Well, well, Bernouin! We don't stand in need of your advice. Place yourself there; take the pen, and write."

"I am ready, monseigneur; what am I to write?"

"There, that's the place; after the two lines already traced."

"I am there."

"Write seven hundred and sixty thousand livres."

"That is written."

"Upon Lyons——" The cardinal appeared to hesitate.

"Upon Lyons," repeated Bernouin.

"Three millions nine hundred thousand livres."

"Well, monseigneur?"

"Upon Bordeaux, seven millions."

"Seven?" repeated Bernouin.

"Yes," said the cardinal, pettishly, "seven." Then, recollecting himself, "You understand, Bernouin," added he, "that all this money is to be spent?"

"Eh! monseigneur; whether it be to be spent or put away is of very little consequence to me, since none of these millions are mine."

"These millions are the king's; it is the king's money I am reckoning. Well, what were we saying? You always interrupt me!"

"Seven millions upon Bordeaux."

"Ah! yes; that's right. Upon Madrid, four millions. I give you to understand plainly whom this money belongs to, Bernouin, seeing that everybody has the stupidity to believe me rich in millions. I repel the silly idea. A minister, besides, has nothing of his own. Come, go on. *Rentrées générales*, seven millions; properties, nine millions. Have you written that, Bernouin?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"*Bourse*, six hundred thousand livres; various property, two millions. Ah! I forgot—the furniture of the different châteaux——"

"Must I put of the crown?" asked Bernouin.

"No, no; it is of no use doing that—that is understood. Have you written that, Bernouin?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"And the ciphers?"

"Stand straight under one another."

"Cast them up, Bernouin."

"Thirty nine millions two hundred and sixty thousand livres, monseigneur."

"Ah!" cried the cardinal, in a tone of vexation; "there are not yet forty millions!"

Bernouin recommenced the addition.

"No, monseigneur; there want seven hundred and forty thousand livres."

Mazarin asked for the account, and revised it carefully.

"Yes, but," said Bernouin, "thirty nine millions two hundred and sixty thousand livres make a good round sum."

"Ah, Bernouin ; I wish the king had it."

"Your eminence told me that this money was his majesty's."

"Doubtless, as clear, as transparent as possible. These thirty-nine millions are bespoken, and much more."

Bernouin smiled after his own fashion—that is, like a man who believes no more than he is willing to believe—whilst preparing the cardinal's night draught, and putting his pillow to rights.

"Oh !" said Mazarin, when the valet had gone out ; "not yet forty millions ! I must, however, attain that sum, which I had set down for myself. But who knows whether I shall have time ? I sink, I am going, I shall never reach it ! And yet, who knows that I may not find two or three millions in the pockets of my good friends the Spaniards ? They discovered Peru, those people did, and—what the devil ! they must have something left."

As he was speaking thus, entirely occupied with his ciphers, and thinking no more of his gout, repelled by a preoccupation which, with the cardinal, was the most powerful of all preoccupations, Bernouin rushed into the chamber, quite in a fright.

"Well !" asked the cardinal, "what is the matter now ?"

"The king, monseigneur,—the king !"

"How ?—the king !" said Mazarin, quickly concealing his paper. "The king here ! the king at this hour ! I thought he was in bed long ago. What is the matter then ?"

The king could hear these last words, and see the terrified gesture of the cardinal, rising up in his bed, for he entered the chamber at that moment.

"It is nothing, monsieur le cardinal, or at least nothing which can alarm you. It is an important communication which I wish to make to your eminence to-night,—that is all."

Mazarin immediately thought of that marked attention which the king had given to his words concerning Mademoiselle de Mancini, and the communication appeared to him probably to refer to this source. He recovered his serenity then instantly, and assumed his most agreeable air, a change of countenance which inspired the king with the greatest joy ; and when Louis was seated,—

"Sire," said the cardinal, "I ought certainly to listen to your majesty standing, but the violence of my complaint—"

"No ceremony between us, my dear monsieur le cardinal," said Louis kindly : "I am your pupil, and not the king, you know very well, and this evening in particular, as I come to you as a petitioner, as a solicitor, and one very humble, and desirous to be kindly received, too."

Mazarin, seeing the heightened colour of the king, was confirmed in his first idea ; that is to say, that love thoughts were hidden under all these fine words. This time, political cunning, keen as it was, made a mistake ; this colour was not caused by the bashfulness of a juvenile passion, but only by the painful contraction of the royal pride.

Like a good uncle, Mazarin felt disposed to facilitate the confidence.

"Speak, sire," said he, "and since your majesty is willing for an instant to forget that I am your subject, and call me your master and instructor, I promise your majesty my most devoted and tender consideration."

"Thanks, monsieur le cardinal," answered the king ; "that which I have to ask of your eminence has but little to do with myself."

"So much the worse !" replied the cardinal ; "so much the worse ! Sire,

I should wish your majesty to ask of me something of importance, even a sacrifice ; but whatever it may be that you ask me, I am ready to set your heart at rest by granting it, my dear sire."

"Well, this is what brings me here," said the king, with a beating of the heart that had no equal except the beating of the heart of the minister : "I have just received a visit from my brother, the king of England."

Mazarin bounded in his bed as if he had been put in relation with a Leyden jar or a voltaic pile, at the same time that a surprise, or rather a manifest disappointment, inflamed his features with such a blaze of anger, that Louis XIV., little diplomatist as he was, saw that the minister had hoped to hear something else.

"Charles II.?" exclaimed Mazarin with a hoarse voice and a disdainful movement of his lips. "You have received a visit from Charles II.?"

"From King Charles II.," replied Louis, according in a marked manner to the grandson of Henry IV. the title which Mazarin had forgotten to give him. "Yes, monsieur le cardinal, that unhappy prince has touched my heart with the relation of his misfortunes. His distress is great, monsieur le cardinal, and it has appeared painful to me, who have seen my own throne disputed, who have been forced in times of commotion to quit my capital,—to me, in short, who am acquainted with misfortune,—to leave a deposed and fugitive brother without assistance."

"Eh!" said the cardinal sharply; "why had he not, as you have, a Jules Mazarin by his side? His crown would then have remained intact."

"I know all that my house owes to your eminence," replied the king haughtily, "and you may believe well that I, on my part, shall never forget it. It is precisely because my brother the king of England has not about him the powerful genius who has saved me, it is for that, I say, that I wish to conciliate the aid of that same genius, and beg you to extend your arm over his head, well assured, monsieur le cardinal, that your hand, by touching him only, would know how to replace upon his brow the crown which fell at the foot of his father's scaffold."

"Sire," replied Mazarin, "I thank you for your good opinion with regard to myself, but we have nothing to do yonder: they are a set of madmen who deny God, and cut off the heads of their kings. They are dangerous, observe, sire, and filthy to the touch after having wallowed in royal blood and covenantal murder. That policy has never suited me,—I scorn it and reject it."

"Therefore you ought to assist in establishing a better."

"What is that?"

"The restoration of Charles II., for example."

"Good heavens!" cried Mazarin, "does the poor prince flatter himself with that chimera?"

"Yes, he does," replied the young king, terrified at the difficulties opposed to this project, which he fancied he could perceive in the infallible eye of his minister; "he only asks for a million to carry out his purpose."

"Is that all?—a little million, if you please!" said the cardinal ironically, with an effort to conquer his Italian accent. "A little million, if you please, brother! Bah! a family of mendicants!"

"Cardinal," said Louis, raising his head, "that family of mendicants is a branch of my family."

"Are you rich enough to give millions to other people, sire? Have you millions to throw away?"

"Oh!" replied Louis XIV. with great pain, which he, however, by a strong effort, prevented from appearing on his countenance;—"oh! yes,

monsieur le cardinal, I am well aware I am poor, and yet the crown of France is worth a million, and to perform a good action, I would pledge my crown, if it were necessary. I could find Jews who would be willing to lend me a million."

"So, sire, you say you want a million?" said Mazarin.

"Yes, monsieur, I say so."

"You are mistaken, greatly mistaken, sire; you want much more than that.—Bernouin!—You shall see, sire, how much you really want."

"What, cardinal!" said the king, "are you going to consult a lackey upon my affairs?"

"Bernouin!" cried the cardinal again, without appearing to remark the humiliation of the young prince. "Come here, Bernouin, and describe the account I made you go into just now."

"Cardinal, cardinal! did you not hear me?" said Louis, becoming pale with anger.

"Do not be angry, sire; I deal openly with the affairs of your majesty. Every one in France knows that; my books are as open as day. What did I tell you to do just now, Bernouin?"

"Your eminence commanded me to cast up an account."

"You did it, did you not?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"To verify the amount of which his majesty, at this moment, stands in need. Did I not tell you so? Be frank, my friend."

"Your eminence said so."

"Well, what sum did I say I wanted?"

"Forty-five millions, I think."

"And what sum could we find, after collecting all our resources?"

"Thirty-nine millions two hundred and sixty thousand."

"That is correct, Bernouin; that is all I wanted to know. Leave us now," said the cardinal, fixing his brilliant eye upon the young king, who sat mute with stupefaction.

"But yet——" stammered the king.

"What, do you still doubt, sire?" said the cardinal. "Well, here is a proof of what I said."

And Mazarin drew from under his bolster the paper covered with figures, which he presented to the king, who turned away his eyes, his vexation was so profound.

"Therefore, as it is a million you want, sire, and that million is not set down here, it is forty-six millions your majesty stands in need of. Well, I don't think that any Jews in the world would lend such a sum, even upon the crown of France."

The king, clenching his hands beneath his ruffles, pushed away his chair.

"So it must be then!" said he; "my brother the king of England will die with hunger."

"Sire," replied Mazarin in the same tone, "remember this proverb, which I give you as the expression of the soundest policy: 'Rejoice at being poor when your neighbour is poor likewise.'"

Louis meditated for a few moments, with an inquisitive glance directed to the paper, one end of which remained under the bolster.

"Then," said he, "it is impossible to comply with my demand for money, monsieur le cardinal, is it?"

"Absolutely, sire."

"Remember, this will secure me a future enemy, if he succeeds in regaining his crown without my assistance."

"If your majesty only fears that, you may be quite at ease," replied Mazarin eagerly.

"Very well, I say no more about it," exclaimed Louis XIV.

"Have I at least convinced you, sire?" placing his hand upon that of the young king.

"Perfectly."

"If there be anything else, ask it, sire ; I shall be most happy to grant it to you, having refused this."

"Anything else, monsieur?"

"Why, yes ; am I not body and soul devoted to your majesty ? *Holà !* Bernouin !—lights and guards for his majesty ! His majesty is returning to his own chamber."

"Not, yet, monsieur ; since you place your goodwill at my disposal, I will take advantage of it."

"For yourself, sire?" asked the cardinal, hoping that his niece was at length about to be named.

"No, monsieur, not for myself," replied Louis, "but still for my brother Charles."

The brow of Mazarin again became clouded, and he grumbled a few words that the king could not catch.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### MAZARIN'S POLICY.

INSTEAD of the hesitation with which he had accosted the cardinal a quarter of an hour before, there might be read in the eyes of the young king that will against which a struggle might be maintained, and which might be crushed by its own impotence, but which, at least, would preserve, like a wound in the depth of the heart, the remembrance of its defeat.

"This time, monsieur le cardinal, we have to do with a thing much more easy to be found than a million."

"Do you think so, sire?" said Mazarin, looking at the king with that penetrating eye which was accustomed to read to the bottom of hearts.

"Yes, I think so ; and when you know the object of my request——"

"And do you think I do not know it, sire?"

"You know what remains for me to say to you?"

"Listen, sire ; these are King Charles's own words——"

"Oh, impossible !"

"Listen. 'And if that miser, that beggarly Italian,' said he——"

"Monsieur le cardinal !"

"That is the sense, if not the words. Eh ! Good heavens ! I wish him no ill on that account ; every one sees with his passions. He said to you : 'If that vile Italian refuses the million we ask of him, sire,—if we are forced, for want of money, to renounce diplomacy, well, then, we will ask him to grant us five hundred gentlemen.'"

The king started, for the cardinal was only mistaken in the number.

"Is not that it, sire?" cried the minister, with a triumphant accent.

"And then he added some fine words : he said, 'I have friends on the other side of the Channel, and these friends only want a leader and a banner. When they shall see me, when they shall behold the banner of France, they will rally round me, for they will comprehend that I have your support. The colours of the French uniform will be worth as much to me as the million M. de Mazarin refuses us,'—for he was pretty well

assured I should refuse him that million.—‘I shall conquer with these five hundred gentlemen, sire, and all the honour will be yours.’ Now, that is what he said, or to that purpose, was it not?—turning those plain words into brilliant metaphors and pompous images, for they are fine talkers, that family! The father talked, even on the scaffold.”

The perspiration of shame stood upon the brow of Louis. He felt that it was inconsistent with his dignity to hear his brother thus insulted, but he did not yet know how to act with him before whom he had seen every one blench, even his mother. At last he made an effort.

“But,” said he, “monsieur le cardinal, it is not five hundred men, it is only two hundred.”

“Well, but you see I guessed what he wanted.”

“I never denied, monsieur, that you had a penetrating eye, and that was why I thought you would not refuse my brother Charles a thing so simple and so easy to grant him as what I ask of you in his name, monsieur le cardinal, or rather in my own.”

“Sire,” said Mazarin, “I have studied policy thirty years : first, under the auspices of M. le Cardinal de Richelieu ; and since, alone. This policy has not always been over-honest, it must be allowed, but it has never been unskilful. Now that which is proposed to your majesty is dishonest and unskilful at the same time.”

“Dishonest, monsieur !”

“Sire, you entered into a treaty with Cromwell.”

“Yes, and in that very treaty Cromwell signed his name above mine.”

“Why did you sign yours so low down, sire ? Cromwell found a good place, and he took it ; that was his custom. I return, then, to M. Cromwell. You have a treaty with him, that is to say, with England, since when you signed that treaty M. Cromwell was England.”

“M. Cromwell is dead.”

“Do you think so, sire ?”

“No doubt he is, since his son Richard has succeeded him, and has abdicated.”

“Yes, that is it exactly. Richard inherited after the death of his father, and England at the abdication of Richard. The treaty formed part of the inheritance, whether in the hands of M. Richard or in the hands of England. The treaty is, then, still as good, as valid as ever. Why should you evade it, sire ? What is changed ? Charles wants that to-day which we were not willing to grant him ten years ago ; but that was foreseen and provided against. You are the ally of England, sire, and not of Charles II. It was doubtless wrong, in a family point of view, to sign a treaty with a man who had cut off the head of the brother-in-law of the king your father, and to contract an alliance with a parliament which they call yonder the Rump Parliament ; it was unbecoming, I acknowledge, but it was not unskilful in a political point of view, since, thanks to that treaty, I saved your majesty, then a minor, the trouble and danger of a foreign war, which the Fronde—you remember the Fronde, sire ?—the young king hung down his head—“which the Fronde might have fatally complicated. And thus I prove to your majesty, that to change our plan now, without warning our allies, would be at once unskilful and dishonest. We should make war with the aggression on our side ; we should make it, deserving to have it made against us ; and we should have the appearance of fearing it whilst provoking it, for a permission granted to five hundred men, to two hundred men, to fifty men, to ten men, is still a permission. One Frenchman, that is the nation ; one uniform, that is the army. Suppose, sire, for example,

that, sooner or later, you should have war with Holland, which, sooner or later, will certainly happen ; or with Spain, which will perhaps ensue if your marriage fails" (Mazarin stole a furtive glance at the king), "and there are a thousand causes that might still make your marriage fail,—well, would you approve of England's sending to the United Provinces or to Spain a regiment, a company, a squadron even, of English gentlemen? Would you think that they kept within the limits of their treaty of alliance?"

Louis listened : it seemed so strange to him that Mazarin should invoke good faith, and he the author of so many political tricks, called Mazarinades. "And yet," said the king, "without any manifest authorisation, I cannot prevent gentlemen of my states from passing over into England, if such should be their good pleasure."

"You ought to compel them to return, sire, or at least protest against their presence as enemies in a country allied with you."

"Well, but come, monsieur le cardinal, you who are so profound a genius, try if you cannot find means to assist this poor king, without compromising ourselves."

"And that is exactly what I am not willing to do, my dear sire," said Mazarin. "If England were to act exactly according to my wishes, she could not act better than she does ; if I directed the policy of England from this place, I should not direct it otherwise. Governed as she is governed, England is an eternal nest of contention for all Europe. Holland protects Charles II., let Holland do so ; they will become angry, they will fight. They are the only two maritime powers. Let them destroy each other's navy ; we can construct ours with the wreck of their vessels, and shall save our money to buy nails with."

"Oh, how paltry and mean all that is you tell me, monsieur le cardinal !"

"Yes, but nevertheless it is true, sire ; you must confess that. There is this, still further. Suppose I admit, for a moment, the possibility of breaking your word, and evading the treaty,—such a thing sometimes happens, but that is when some great interest is to be promoted by it, or when the treaty is found to be too troublesome,—well, you will authorise the engagement asked of you : France—her banner, which is the same thing—will cross the Straits and will fight ; France will be conquered."

"Why so?"

"*Ma foi!* there is a pretty general for us to fight under,—this Charles II.! Worcester gave us good proofs of that."

"But he will no longer have to deal with Cromwell, monsieur."

"But he will have to deal with Monk, who is quite as dangerous. The brave brewer of whom we are speaking, was a visionary ; he had moments of exaltation, faintings, during which he ran over or split like a too full cask ; and from the chinks there always escaped some drops of his thoughts, and by the sample the whole of his thought was to be made out. Cromwell has thus allowed us more than ten times to penetrate into his very soul, when one would have conceived that soul to be enveloped in triple brass, as Horace has it. But Monk ! Oh, sire, God defend you from ever having anything politically to transact with Monk. It is he who has given me, in one year, all the grey hairs I have. Monk is no fanatic ; unfortunately he is a politician ; he does not split, he keeps close together. For ten years he has had his eyes fixed upon one object, and nobody has yet been able to ascertain what. Every morning, as Louis XI. advised, he burns his nightcap. Therefore, on the day when this plan, slowly and

solitarily ripened, shall break forth, it will break forth with all the conditions of the success which always accompany an unforeseen event.

"That is Monk, sire, of whom, perhaps, you have never heard—of whom, perhaps, you did not know the name even, before your brother, Charles II., who knows what he is, pronounced it before you. He is a wonder of depth and tenacity, the two only things against which intelligence and ardour are blunted. Sire, I had ardour when I was young ; I always had intelligence. I may safely boast of it, because I am reproached with it. I have done very well with these two qualities, since, from the son of a fisherman of Piscina, I am become first minister of the king of France ; and in that quality your majesty will perhaps acknowledge I have rendered some services to the throne of your majesty. Well, sire, if I had met with Monk on my way, instead of Monsieur de Beaufort, Monsieur de Retz, or Monsieur le Prince—well, we should have been ruined. If you engage yourself rashly, sire, you will fall into the talons of this politic soldier. The casque of Monk, sire, is an iron coffer, in the recesses of which he shuts up his thoughts, and no one has the key of it. Therefore, near him, or rather before him, I bow, sire, for I have nothing but a velvet cap."

"What do you think Monk wishes to do, then ?"

"Eh ! sire, if I knew that, I would not tell you to mistrust him, for I should be stronger than he ; but with him I am afraid to guess—to guess !—you understand my word?—for if I thought I had guessed, I should stop at an idea, and, in spite of myself, should pursue that idea. Since that man has been in power yonder, I am like those damned souls in Dante, whose necks Satan has twisted, and who walk forward, looking behind them. I am travelling towards Madrid, but I never lose sight of London. To guess, with that devil of a man, is to deceive one's self, and to deceive one's self is to ruin one's self. God keep me from ever seeking to guess what he aims at ; I confine myself to watching what he does, and that is pretty well enough. Now, I believe—you observe the extent of the word *I believe?*—*I believe*, with respect to Monk, ties one to nothing—I believe that he has a strong inclination to succeed Cromwell. Your Charles II. has already caused proposals to be made to him by ten persons ; he has satisfied himself with driving these ten meddlers from his presence, without saying anything to them but, 'Begone, or I will have you hung.' That man is a sepulchre ! At this moment Monk is affecting devotion to the Rump Parliament ; of this devotion, observe, I am not the dupe. Monk has no wish to be assassinated,—an assassination would stop him in the midst of his operations ; and his work must be accomplished ;—so I believe—but do not believe what I believe, sire ; for I say I believe from habit—I believe that Monk is keeping well with the parliament till the day comes for his dispersing it. You are asked for swords, but they are to fight against Monk. God preserve you from fighting against Monk, sire ; for Monk would beat us, and I should never console myself after being beaten by Monk. I should say to myself, Monk has foreseen that victory ten years. For God's sake, sire, out of friendship for you, if not out of consideration for himself, let Charles II. keep quiet. Your majesty will make him a little revenue here ; you will give him one of your châteaux. Yes, yes—wait awhile. But I forgot the treaty—that famous treaty of which we were just now speaking. Your majesty has not even the right to give him a château."

"How is that ?"

"Yes, yes ; your majesty is bound not to afford hospitality to King

Charles, and to compel him to leave France even. It was on this account we forced him to quit it ; and yet here he is returned again. Sire, I hope you will give your brother to understand that he cannot remain with us ; that it is impossible he should be allowed to compromise us ; or I myself——”

“Enough, monsieur,” said Louis XIV., rising. “For to refuse me a million, perhaps you have the right ; your millions are your own. To refuse me two hundred gentlemen, you have still further the right ; for you are first minister, and you have, in the eyes of France, the responsibility of peace and war. But that you should pretend to prevent me, who am king, affording hospitality to the grandson of Henry IV, to my cousin-german, to the companion of my childhood—there your power stops, and there commences my will.”

“Sire,” said Mazarin, delighted at being let off so cheaply, and who had, besides, only fought so earnestly to arrive at that,—“sire, I will always bend before the will of my king. Let my king, then, keep near him, or in one of his châteaux, the king of England ; let Mazarin know it, but let not the minister know it.”

“Good-night, monsieur,” said Louis XIV. ; “I go away in despair.”

“But convinced ; and that is all I desire, sire,” replied Mazarin.

The king made no answer, and retired quite pensive, convinced, not of all Mazarin had told him, but of one thing which he took care not to mention to him ; and that was, that it was necessary for him to study seriously both his own affairs and those of Europe, for he found them very difficult and very obscure. Louis found the king of England seated in the same place that he had left him in. On perceiving him, the English prince arose ; but at the first glance he saw discouragement in dark letters upon his cousin's brow. Then, speaking first, as if to facilitate the painful avowal that Louis had to make to him,—

“Whatever may it be,” said he, “I shall never forget all the kindness, all the friendship, you have exhibited towards me.”

“Alas !” replied Louis, in a melancholy tone, “only sterile good-will, my brother.”

Charles II. became extremely pale ; he passed his cold hand over his brow, and struggled for a few instants against a faintness that made him tremble. “I understand,” said he at last ; “no more hope !”

Louis seized the hand of Charles II. “Wait, my brother,” said he ; “precipitate nothing ; everything may change ; it is extreme resolutions that ruin causes ; add another year of trial, I implore you, to the years you have already undergone. You have, to induce you to act now rather than at another time, neither occasion nor opportunity. Come with me, my brother ; I will give you one of my residences, whichever you prefer, to inhabit. I, with you, will keep my eye upon events ; we will prepare. Come, then, my brother, have courage !”

Charles II. withdrew his hand from that of the king, and drawing back, to salute him with more ceremony, “With all my heart, thanks !” replied he, “sire ; but I have prayed without success to the greatest king on earth ; now I will go and ask a miracle of God.” And he went out without being willing to hear any more, his head carried loftily, his hand trembling, with a painful contraction of his noble countenance, and that profound gloom which, finding no more hope in the world of men, appeared to go beyond it, and ask it in worlds unknown. The officer of musketeers, on seeing him pass by thus pale, bowed almost to his knees as he saluted him. He then took a flambeau, called two musketeers, and descended

the desert staircase with the unfortunate king, holding in his left hand his hat, the plume of which swept the steps. Arrived at the door, the musketeer asked the king which way he was going, that he might direct the musketeers.

"Monsieur," replied Charles II., in a subdued voice, "you who have known my father, say, did you ever pray for him? If you have done so, do not forget me in your prayers. Now, I am going alone, and beg of you not to accompany me, or have me accompanied further."

The officer bowed, and sent away the musketeers into the interior of the palace. But he himself remained an instant under the porch to watch the departure of Charles II., till he was lost in the turning of the next street. "To him, as to his father formerly," murmured he, "Athos, if he were here, would say with reason,—'Salutation to fallen majesty!'" Then, reascending the staircase: "Oh! the vile service that I follow!" said he at every step. "Oh! my pitiful master! Life thus carried on is no longer tolerable, and it is at length time that I do something! No more generosity, no more energy! The master has succeeded, the pupil is starved for ever. *Mordieux!* I will not resist. Come, you men," continued he, entering the antechamber, "why are you all looking at me so? Extinguish these flambeaux, and return to your posts. Ah! you were guarding me? Yes, you watch over me, do you not, worthy fellows? Brave fools! I am not the Duc de Guise. Begone! They will not assassinate me in the little colander. Besides," added he, in a low voice, "that would be a resolution, and no resolutions have been formed since Monsieur le Cardinal de Richelieu died. Now, with all his faults, that was a man! It is decided: to-morrow I will throw my cassock to the nettles."

Then, reflecting: "No," said he, "not yet! I have one great trial to make, and I will make it; but that, and I swear it, shall be the last, *mordieux!*"

He had not finished speaking, when a voice issued from the king's chamber. "Monsieur le lieutenant!" said this voice.

"Here am I," replied he.

"The king desires to speak to you."

"Humph!" said the lieutenant; "perhaps this is for what I was thinking about." And he went into the king's apartment.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE KING AND THE LIEUTENANT.

AS soon as the king saw the officer enter, he dismissed his *valet-de-chambre* and his gentleman. "Who is on duty to-morrow, monsieur?" asked he.

The lieutenant bowed his head with military politeness, and replied, "I am, sire."

"How! you still?"

"I always, sire."

"How can that be, monsieur?"

"Sire, when travelling, the musketeers supply all the posts of your majesty's household: that is to say, yours, her majesty the queen's, and monsieur le cardinal's, the latter of whom borrows of the king the best part, or rather the most numerous part, of the royal guard."

"But in the interims?"

"There are no interims, sire, but for twenty or thirty men who rest out of a hundred and twenty. At the Louvre it is very different, and if I were

at the Louvre, I should rest upon my brigadier ; but, when travelling, sire, no one knows what may happen, and I prefer doing my duty myself."

"Then you are on guard every day?"

"And every night. Yes, sire."

"Monsieur, I cannot allow that,—I will have you rest."

"That is very kind, sire ; but I will not."

"What do you say?" said the king, who did not at first comprehend the full meaning of this reply.

"I say, sire, that I will not expose myself to the chance of a fault. If the devil had an ill turn to play me, you understand, sire, as he knows the man with whom he has to deal, he would choose the moment when I should not be there. My duty and the peace of my conscience before everything, sire."

"But such duty will kill you, monsieur."

"Eh ! sire, I have performed it thirty years, and in all France and Navarre there is not a man in better health than I am. Moreover, I entreat you, sire, not to trouble yourself about me. That would appear very strange to me, seeing that I am not accustomed to it."

The king cut short the conversation by a fresh question. "Shall you be here, then, to-morrow morning?"

"As at present? yes, sire."

The king walked several times up and down his chamber ; it was very plain that he burned with a desire to speak, but that he was restrained by some fear or other. The lieutenant, standing motionless, hat in hand, leaning on his hip, watched him making these evolutions, and, whilst looking at him, grumbled to himself, biting his moustache.

"For a demi-pistole, he has not resolution enough ! *Parole d'honneur !* I would lay a wager he does not speak at all !"

The king continued to walk about, casting from time to time a side glance at the lieutenant. "He is the very spit of his father," continued the latter, in his secret monologue ; "he is at once proud, avaricious, and timid. The devil take his master, say I."

The king stopped. "Lieutenant," said he.

"I am here, sire."

"Why did you cry out this evening, down below in the *salons*—'On the king's service ! His majesty's musketeers !'"

"Because you gave me the order, sire."

"I?"

"Yourself."

"Indeed, I did not say a word, monsieur."

"Sire, an order is given by a sign, by a gesture, by a glance, as intelligibly, as freely, and as clearly as by word of mouth. A servant who has nothing but ears, is not half a good servant."

"Your eyes are very penetrating, then, monsieur."

"How is that, sire?"

"Because they see what is not."

"My eyes are good, though, sire, although they have served their master long and much ; when they have anything to see, they seldom miss the opportunity. Now, this evening, they saw that your majesty coloured with endeavouring to conceal your inclination to gape ; that your majesty looked with eloquent supplications, first at his eminence, and then at her majesty the queen-mother, and at length to the door of entrance ; and they so thoroughly remarked all I have said, that they saw your majesty's lips articulate these words : 'Who will get me out of this?'"

"Monsieur !"

"Or something to this effect, sire,—‘My musketeers !’ I could then no longer hesitate. That look was for me—the order was for me. I cried out instantly, ‘His majesty’s musketeers !’ And, besides, that is proved to be true, sire, not only by your majesty’s not saying I was wrong, but proving I was right by going out at once.”

The king turned away to smile ; then, after a few seconds, he again fixed his limpid eye upon that countenance, so intelligent, so bold, and so firm, that it might have been said to be the proud and energetic profile of the eagle in face of the sun. “That is all very well,” said he, after a short silence, during which he endeavoured, in vain, to look his officer down.

But, seeing the king said no more, the latter pirouetted on his heels, and made three steps towards the door, muttering, “He will not speak ! *Mordoux !* he will not speak !”

“Thank you, monsieur,” said the king at last.

“Humph !” continued the lieutenant ; “there only wanted that. Blamed for having been less of a fool than another might have been.” And he gained the door, allowing his spurs to jingle in true military style. But when he was upon the threshold, feeling that the king’s desire drew him back, he returned.

“Has your majesty told me all ?” asked he, in a tone we cannot describe, but which, without appearing to solicit the royal confidence, contained so much persuasive frankness, that the king immediately replied :

“Yes ; but draw near, monsieur.”

“Now, then,” murmured the officer, “he is coming to it at last.”

“Listen to me.”

“I will not lose a word, sire.”

“You will mount on horseback to-morrow, at about half past four in the morning, and you will have a horse saddled for me.”

“From your majesty’s stables ?”

“No ; one of your musketeers’ horses.”

“Very well, sire. Is that all ?”

“And you will accompany me.”

“Alone ?”

“Alone.”

“Shall I come to seek your majesty, or shall I wait ?”

“You will wait for me.”

“Where, sire ?”

“At the little park-gate.”

The lieutenant bowed, understanding that the king had told him all he had to say. In fact, the king dismissed him with a gracious wave of the hand. The officer left the chamber of the king, and returned to place himself philosophically in his *fauteuil*, where, far from sleeping, as might have been expected, considering how late it was, he began to reflect more profoundly than he had ever reflected before. The result of these reflections was not so melancholy as the preceding ones had been.

“Come, he has begun,” said he. “Love urges him on, and he goes forward—he goes forward ! The king is nobody in his own palace ; but the man perhaps may prove to be worth something. Well, we shall see to-morrow morning. Oh ! oh !” cried he, all at once starting up, “that is a gigantic idea, *mordoux !* and perhaps my fortune depends, at least, upon that idea !” After this exclamation, the officer arose and marched, with his hands in the pockets of his *justaucorps*, about the immense ante-chamber that served him as an apartment. The wax-light flamed furiously

under the effects of a fresh breeze which stole in through the chinks of the door and the window, and cut the *salle* diagonally. It threw out a reddish, unequal light, sometimes brilliant, sometimes dull, and the tall shadow of the lieutenant was seen marching on the wall, in profile, like a figure by Callot, with his long sword and feathered hat.

"Certes !" said he, "I am mistaken if Mazarin is not laying a snare for this amorous boy. Mazarin, this evening, gave an address, and made an appointment as complacently as M. Dangeau himself could have done—I heard him, and I know the meaning of his words. 'To-morrow morning,' said he, 'they will pass opposite the bridge of Blois.' *Mordieux!* that is clear enough, and particularly for a lover. That is the cause of this embarrassment ; that is the cause of this hesitation ; that is the cause of this order,—'Monsieur the lieutenant of my musketeers, be on horseback to-morrow at four o'clock in the morning.' Which is as clear as if he had said,—'Monsieur the lieutenant of my musketeers, to-morrow, at four, at the bridge of Blois,—do you understand?' Here is a state secret, then, which I, humble as I am, have in my possession, while it is in action. And how do I get it? Because I have good eyes, as his majesty just now said. They say he loves this little Italian doll furiously. They say he threw himself at his mother's feet, to ask her to allow him to marry her. They say the queen went so far as to consult the court of Rome, whether such a marriage, contracted against her will, would be valid. Oh, if I were but twenty-five! If I had by my side those I no longer have! If I did not despise the whole world most profoundly, I would embroil Mazarin with the queen-mother, France with Spain, and I would make a queen after my own fashion. But let that pass." And the lieutenant snapped his fingers in disdain.

"This miserable Italian—this poor creature—this sordid wretch—who has just refused the king of England a million, would not perhaps give me a thousand pistoles for the news I could carry him. *Mordieux!* I am falling into second childhood ;—I am becoming stupid indeed! The idea of Mazarin giving anything! ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed in a subdued voice.

"Well, let us go to sleep—let us go to sleep ; and the sooner the better. My mind is fatigued with my evening's work, and will see things to-morrow more clearly than to-day."

And upon this recommendation, made to himself, he folded his cloak around him, looking with contempt upon his royal neighbour. Five minutes after this he was asleep, with his hands clenched and his lips apart, allowing to escape, not his secret, but a sonorous sound, which rose and spread freely beneath the majestic roof of the ante-chamber.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

MARY DE MANCINI.

THE sun had scarcely enlightened the majestic trees of the park and the lofty turrets of the castle with its first beams, when the young king, who had been awake more than two hours, possessed by the sleeplessness of love, opened his shutters himself, and cast an inquiring look into the courts of the sleeping palace. He saw that it was the hour agreed upon: the great court clock pointed to a quarter past four. He did not disturb his *valet-de-chambre*, who was sleeping profoundly at some distance; he dressed himself, and the valet, in a great fright, sprang up, thinking he had

been deficient in his duty ; but the king sent him back again, commanding him to preserve the most absolute silence. He then descended the little staircase, went out at a lateral door, and perceived at the end of the wall a mounted horseman, holding another horse by the bridle. This horseman was not to be recognised in his cloak and slouched hat. As to the horse, saddled like that of a rich citizen, it had nothing remarkable about it to the most experienced eye. Louis took the bridle ; the officer held the stirrup without dismounting, and asked his majesty's orders in a low voice.

"Follow me," replied the king.

The officer put his horse to the trot, behind that of his master, and they descended the hill towards the bridge. When arrived at the other side of the Loire,—

"Monsieur," said the king, "you will please to ride on till you see a carriage coming ; then return and inform me. I will wait here."

"Will your majesty deign to give me some description of the carriage I am charged to discover?"

"A carriage in which you will see two ladies, and probably their attendants likewise."

"Sire, I should not wish to make a mistake ; is there no other sign by which I may know this carriage?"

"It will bear, in all probability, the arms of monsieur le cardinal."

"That is sufficient, sire," replied the officer, fully instructed in the object of his search. He put his horse to the trot, and rode sharply on in the direction pointed out by the king. But he had scarcely gone five hundred paces when he saw four mules, and then a carriage, loom up from behind a little hill. Behind this carriage came another. It required only one glance to assure him that these were the equipages he was in search of ; he therefore turned his bridle, and rode back to the king.

"Sire," said he, "here are the carriages. The first, as you said, contains two ladies with their *femmes-de-chambre* ; the second contains the footmen, provisions, and necessaries."

"That is well," replied the king, in an agitated voice. "Please to go and tell those ladies that a cavalier of the court wishes to pay his respects to them alone."

The officer set off at a gallop. "*Mordioux !*" said he, as he rode on, "here is a new and honourable employment, I hope ! I complained of being nobody. I am the king's confidant : that is enough to make a musketeer burst with pride."

He approached the carriage, and delivered his message, gallantly and intelligently. There were two ladies in the carriage : one of great beauty, although rather thin ; the other less favoured by nature, but lively, graceful, and uniting in the light folds of her brow all the signs of a strong will. Her eyes, animated and piercing, in particular, spoke more eloquently than all the amorous phrases in fashion in those days of gallantry. It was to her D'Artagnan addressed himself, without fear of being mistaken, although the other was, as we have said, the more handsome of the two.

"Madame," said he, "I am the lieutenant of the musketeers, and there is on the road a cavalier who awaits you, and is desirous of paying his respects to you."

At these words, the effect of which he watched closely, the lady with the black eyes uttered a cry of joy, leant out of the carriage window, and, seeing the cavalier approaching, held out her arms, exclaiming :

"Ah, my dear sire !" and the tears gushed from her eyes.

The coachman stopped his team ; the women rose in confusion from the bottom of the carriage, and the second lady made a slight reverence, terminated by the most ironical smile that jealousy ever imparted to the lips of woman.

"Mary, dear Mary !" cried the king, taking the hand of the black-eyed lady in both his. And opening the heavy door himself, he drew her out of the carriage with so much ardour, that she was in his arms before she touched the ground. The lieutenant, posted on the other side of the carriage, saw and heard all without being observed.

The king offered his arm to Mademoiselle de Mancini, and made a sign to the coachman and lackeys to proceed. It was nearly six o'clock ; the road was fresh and pleasant ; tall trees with the foliage still enclosed in the golden down of their buds, let the dew of morning filter from their trembling branches, like liquid diamonds ; the grass was bursting at the foot of the hedges ; the swallows, only a few days returned, described their graceful curves between the heavens and the water ; a breeze, perfumed by the blossoming woods, sighed along the road, and wrinkled the surface of the waters of the river : all these beauties of the day, all these perfumes of the plants, all these aspirations of the earth towards the heavens, intoxicated the two lovers, walking side by side, leaning upon each other, eyes fixed upon eyes, hand clasped within hand, and who, lingering as by a common desire, did not care to speak, they had so much to say.

The officer saw that the king's horse pulled this way and that, and inconvenienced Mademoiselle de Mancini. He took advantage of the pretext of taking the horse to draw near to them, and dismounted, and walking between the two horses he led, he did not lose a single word or gesture of the lovers. It was Mademoiselle de Mancini who at length began.

"Ah, my dear sire !" said she, "you do not abandon me, then ?"

"No," replied the king ; "you see I do not, Mary."

"I had been so often told, though, that as soon as we should be separated you would no longer think of me."

"Dear Mary, is it then to-day only that you have discovered we are surrounded by people interested in deceiving us ?"

"But then, sire, this journey, this alliance with Spain ? They are going to marry you !"

Louis hung his head. At the same time the officer could see in the sun the eyes of Mary de Mancini shine with the brilliancy of a poniard starting from its sheath. "And you have done nothing in favour of our love ?" asked the girl, after a silence of a moment.

"Ah ! mademoiselle, how could you believe that ? I threw myself at the feet of my mother ; I begged her, I implored her ; I told her all my hopes of happiness were in you ; I even threatened——"

"Well ?" asked Mary, eagerly.

"Well, the queen mother wrote to the court of Rome, and received as answer, that a marriage between us would have no validity, and would be dissolved by the holy father. At length, finding there was no hope for us, I requested to have my marriage with the infanta at least delayed."

"And yet that does not prevent your being on the road to meet her ?"

"What would you have ? To my prayers, to my supplications, to my tears, I received no answer but reasons of state."

"Well, well ?"

"Well, what is to be done, mademoiselle, when so many wills are leagued against me ?"

It was now Mary's turn to hang her head. "Then I must bid you adieu

for ever," said she. "You know that I am being exiled ; you know that I am going to be buried alive ; you know still more that they want to marry me also."

Louis became very pale, and placed his hand upon his heart.

"If I had thought that my life only had been at stake, I have been so persecuted that I might have yielded ; but I thought yours was concerned, my dear sire, and I stood out for the sake of preserving your happiness."

"Oh, yes ! my happiness, my treasure !" murmured the king, more gallantly than passionately, perhaps.

"The cardinal might have yielded," said Mary, "if you had addressed yourself to him, if you had pressed him. For the cardinal to call the king of France his nephew ! do you not perceive, sire ? He would have made war even for that honour ; the cardinal, assured of governing alone, under the double pretext of having brought up the king and given his niece to him in marriage—the cardinal would have combated all wills, overcome all obstacles. Oh, sire ! I can answer for that. I am a woman, and I see clearly into everything where love is concerned."

These words produced a strange effect upon the king. Instead of heightening his passion, they cooled it. He stopped, and said with precipitation :

"What is to be said, mademoiselle ? Everything has failed."

"Except your will, I trust, my dear sire ?"

"Alas !" said the king, colouring, "have I a will ?"

"Oh !" allowed mademoiselle de Mancini to escape mournfully, wounded by that expression.

"The king has no will but that which policy dictates, but that which reasons of state impose upon him."

"Oh ! it is because you have no love," cried Mary ; "if you loved, sire, you would have a will."

On pronouncing these words, Mary raised her eyes to her lover, whom she saw more pale and more cast down than an exile who is about to quit his native land for ever. "Accuse me," murmured the king, "but do not say I do not love you."

A long silence followed these words, which the young king had pronounced with a perfectly true and profound feeling. "I am unable to think that to-morrow, and after to-morrow, I shall see you no more ; I cannot think that I am going to end my sad days at a distance from Paris ; that the lips of an old man, of an unknown, should touch that hand which you hold within yours ; no, in truth, I cannot think of all that, my dear sire, without my poor heart bursting with despair."

And Mary de Mancini did shed floods of tears. On his part, the king, affected, carried his handkerchief to his mouth, and stifled a sob.

"See," said she, "the carriages have stopped, my sister waits for me, the time is come ; what you are about to decide upon, will be decided for life. Oh, sire ! you are willing then that I should lose you ? You are willing then, Louis, that she to whom you have said 'I love you,' should belong to another man than to her king, to her master, to her lover ? Oh ! courage, Louis ! courage ! One word, a single word ! Say 'I will !' and all my life is enchained to yours, and all my heart is yours for ever."

The king made no reply. Mary then looked at him as Dido looked at Æneas in the Elysian fields, fierce and disdainful.

"Adieu, then," said she ; "adieu life ! adieu love ! adieu heaven !"

And she made a step to depart. The king detained her, seized her hand, which he glued to his lips, and, despair prevailing over the resolution he

appeared to have inwardly formed, he let fall upon that beautiful hand a burning tear of regret, which made Mary start, so really had that tear burnt her. She saw the humid eyes of the king, his pale brow, his convulsed lips, and cried, with an accent that cannot be described :

“ Oh, sire ! you are a king, you weep, and yet I depart ! ”

As his sole reply, the king concealed his face in his handkerchief. The officer here uttered something so like a roar that it frightened the horses. Mademoiselle de Mancini, quite indignant, quitted the king's arm, got precipitately into the carriage, crying to the coachman,—“ Go on, go on, and quick ! ”

The coachman obeyed, flogged his mules, and the heavy carriage rocked upon its creaking axle, whilst the king of France, alone, cast down, annihilated, did not dare to look either behind or before him.

## CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE KING AND THE LIEUTENANT EACH GIVE PROOFS OF MEMORY.

WHEN the king, like all the people in the world who are in love, had long and attentively watched the disappearance in the horizon of the carriage which bore away his mistress ; when he had turned and turned again a hundred times to the same way, and had at length succeeded in calming in a degree the agitation of his heart and thoughts, he recollected that he was not alone. The officer still held the horse by the bridle, and had not lost all hope of seeing the king recover his resolution. He had still the resource of mounting, and riding after the carriage ; they would have lost nothing by waiting a little. But the imagination of the lieutenant was too rich and too brilliant ; it left far behind it that of the king, who took care not to allow himself to be carried away by such an excess of luxury. He contented himself with approaching the officer, and in a doleful voice, “ Come,” said he, “ let us be gone ; all is ended. To horse . ”

The officer imitated this carriage, this slowness, this sadness, and leisurely mounted his horse. The king pushed on sharply, the lieutenant followed him. At the bridge Louis turned round for the last time. The lieutenant, patient as a god who has eternity behind and before him, still hoped for a return of energy. But it was groundless, nothing appeared. Louis gained the street which led to the castle, and entered as seven was striking. When once the king was returned, and the musketeer, who saw everything, had seen a corner of the tapestry rise at the window of the cardinal, he breathed a profound sigh, like a man unloosed from the tightest bonds, and said in a low voice :

“ Now then, my officer, I hope that it is over.”

The king summoned his gentleman “ Please to understand I shall receive nobody before two o'clock,” said he

“ Sure,” replied the gentleman, “ there is, however, some one who requests admittance . ”

“ Who is that ? — “ Your lieutenant of musketeers.”

“ He who accompanied me ? ” — “ Yes, sire.”

“ Ah ! ” said the king, “ let him come in ”

The officer entered. The king made a sign, and the gentleman and the valet retired. Louis followed them with his eyes until they had shut the door, and when the tapestries had fallen behind them,—“ You remind me

by your presence, monsieur, of something I had forgotten to recommend to you, that is to say, the most absolute discretion."

"Oh! sire, why does your majesty give yourself the trouble of making me such a recommendation? It is plain you do not know me."

"Yes, monsieur, that is true. I know that you are discreet; but as I had prescribed nothing——"

The officer bowed. "Has your majesty nothing else to say to me?"

"No, monsieur; you may retire."

"Shall I obtain permission not to do so till I have spoken to the king, sire?"

"What have you to say to me? Explain yourself, monsieur."

"Sire, a thing without importance to you, but which interests me greatly. Pardon me then for speaking of it. Without urgency, without necessity, I never would have done it, and I would have disappeared, mute and insignificant as I always have been."

"How! Disappeared! I do not understand you, monsieur."

"Sire, in a word," said the officer, "I am come to ask for my discharge from your majesty's service."

The king made a movement of surprise, but the officer remained as motionless as a statue.

"Your discharge—yours, monsieur? and for how long a time, I pray?"

"Why, for ever, sire."

"What, you are desirous of quitting my service, monsieur?" said Louis, with an expression that revealed something more than surprise.

"Sire, I have that regret."

"Impossible!"

"It is so, however, sire. I am getting old; I have worn harness now thirty-five years; my poor shoulders are tired; I feel that I must give place to the young. I don't belong to this age; I have still one foot in the old one; it results that everything is strange in my eyes, everything astonishes and bewilders me. In short, I have the honour to ask for my discharge of your majesty."

"Monsieur," said the king looking at the officer, who wore his uniform with an ease that would have created envy in a young man, "you are stronger and more vigorous than I am."

"Oh!" replied the officer, with an air of false modesty, "your majesty says so because I still have a good eye and a tolerably firm foot—because I can still ride a horse, and my moustache is black; but, sire, vanity of vanities all that—illusions all that—appearance, smoke, sire! I have still a young air, it is true, but I am old at bottom; and within six months I feel certain I shall be broken down, gouty, impotent. Therefore, then, sire——"

"Monsieur," interrupted the king, "remember your words of yesterday. You said to me in this very place where you now are, that you were endowed with the best health of any man in France; that fatigue was unknown to you! that you cared not for passing whole days and nights at your post. Did you tell me that, monsieur, or not? Recall your memory, monsieur."

The officer breathed a sigh. "Sire," said he, "old age is boastful; and it is pardonable for old men to make the eulogy of those for whom others no longer make it. It is very possible I said that; but the fact is, sire, I am very much fatigued, and request permission to retire."

"Monsieur," said the king, advancing towards the officer with a gesture at once full of address and majesty, "you are not assigning me the true

reason. You wish to quit my service, it may be true, but you disguise from me the motive for your retreat."

"Sire, believe that——"

"I believe what I see, monsieur; I see a vigorous, energetic man, full of presence of mind, the best soldier in France, perhaps; and this personage cannot persuade me the least in the world that you stand in need of rest."

"Ah! sire," said the lieutenant, with bitterness, "what praises! Indeed, your majesty confounds me! Energetic, vigorous, brave, intelligent, the best soldier in the army! But, sire, your majesty exaggerates my small portion of merit to such a point, that, however good an opinion I may have of myself, I do not recognise myself; in truth I do not. If I were vain enough to believe only half of your majesty's words, I should consider myself as a valuable, indispensable man. I should say that a servant possessed of such brilliant qualities was a treasure beyond all price. Now, sire, I have been all my life—I feel bound to say it—except at the present time, appreciated, in my opinion, much beneath my value. I therefore repeat, your majesty exaggerates."

The king knitted his brow, for he saw a bitter raillery beneath the words of the officer. "Come, monsieur," said he, "let us meet the question frankly. Are you dissatisfied with my service, say? No evasions; speak boldly, frankly—I command you to do so."

The officer, who had been twisting his hat about in his hands, with an embarrassed air, for several minutes, raised his head at these words. "Oh! sire," said he, "that puts me a little more at my ease. To a question put so frankly, I will reply frankly. To tell the truth is a good thing, as much from the pleasure one feels in relieving one's heart, as on account of the rarity of the fact. I will speak the truth, then, to my king, at the same time imploring him to excuse the frankness of an old soldier."

Louis looked at his officer with anxious inquietude, which was manifested by agitation of his gesture. "Well, then, speak," said he, "for I am impatient to hear the truths you have to tell me."

The officer threw his hat upon a table, and his countenance, always so intelligent and martial, assumed, all at once, a strange character of grandeur and solemnity. "Sire," said he, "I quit the king's service because I am dissatisfied. The valet, in these times, can approach his master as respectfully as I do, can give him an account of his labour, bring back his tools, render the funds that have been intrusted to him, and say, 'Master, my day's work is done; pay me, if you please, and let us part.'"

"Monsieur! monsieur!" exclaimed the king, purple with rage.

"Ah! sire," replied the officer, bending his knee for a moment, "never was servant more respectful than I am before your majesty; only you commanded me to tell the truth. Now I have begun to tell it, it must come out, even if you command me to hold my tongue."

There was so much resolution expressed in the deep-sunk muscles of the officer's countenance, that Louis XIV. had no occasion to tell him to continue; he continued, then, whilst the king looked at him with a curiosity mingled with admiration.

"Sire, I have, as I have said, now served the house of France thirty-five years; few people have worn out so many swords in that service as I have, and the swords I speak of were good swords, too, sire. I was a boy, ignorant of everything except courage, when the king your father divined that there was a man in me. I was a man, sire, when the Cardinal de Richelieu, who was a judge of manhood, divined an enemy in me. Sire,

the history of that enmity between the ant and the lion may be read, from the first to the last line, in the secret archives of your family. If ever you feel an inclination to view it, do it, sire; the history is worth the trouble—it is I who tell you so. You will there read that the lion, fatigued, harassed, out of breath, at length cried for quarter, and the justice must be rendered him to say, that he gave as much as he required. Oh! those were glorious times, sire, strewed over with battles like one of Tasso's or Ariosto's epopees! The wonders of those times, to which the people of ours would refuse belief, were every-day occurrences. For five years together, I was a hero every day; at least, so I was told by personages of merit; and that is a long period for heroism, trust me, sire, is a period of five years. Nevertheless, I have faith in what these people told me, for they were good judges. They were named M. de Richelieu, M. de Buckingham, M. de Beaufort, M. de Retz, a rough genius himself in street warfare. In short, the king, Louis XIII., and even the queen, your august mother, who one day condescended to say, '*Thank you.*' I don't know what service I had had the good fortune to render her. Pardon me, sire, for speaking so boldly; but what I relate to you, as I have already had the honour to tell your majesty, is history."

The king bit his lips, and threw himself violently into his *fauteuil*.

"I appear importunate to your majesty," said the lieutenant. "Eh! sire, that is the fate of truth; she is a stern companion; she bristles all over with steel; she wounds those she attacks, and sometimes him who speaks her."

"No, monsieur," replied the king; "I bade you speak—speak then."

"After the service of the king and the cardinal, came the service of the regency, sire; I fought pretty well in the Fronde—much less though than the first time. The men began to diminish in stature. I have, nevertheless, led your majesty's musketeers on some perilous occasions, which stand upon the orders of the day of the company. Mine was a beautiful lot then! I was the favourite of M. de Mazarin. Lieutenant here! lieutenant there! lieutenant to the right! lieutenant to the left! There was not a buffet dealt in France, of which your humble servant was not charged with the dealing; but they soon became not contented with France; monsieur le cardinal, he sent me to England on Cromwell's account; another gentleman who was not over gentle, I assure you, sire. I had the honour to know him, and I was well able to appreciate him. A great deal was promised me on account of that mission. So, as I did in it quite contrary to all I had been bidden to do, I was generously paid, for I was at length appointed captain of the musketeers; that is to say, to the post most envied at court, which takes the *pas* over the *maréchals* of France, and with justice; for when the captain of the musketeers is named, the flower and king of the brave is named."

"Captain, monsieur!" interrupted the king; "you make a mistake. Lieutenant, you mean to say."

"Not at all, sire—I make no mistake; your majesty may rely upon me in that respect. Monsieur le cardinal gave me the commission himself."

"Well!"

"But M. de Mazarin, as you know better than anybody, does not often give, and sometimes takes back what he has given; he took it back again as soon as peace was made and he was no longer in want of me. Certes, I was not worthy to replace M. de Tréville, of illustrious memory; but they had promised me, and they had given me; they ought to have stopped there."

"Is that what dissatisfies you, monsieur? Well, I will make inquiries. I love justice; and your claim, though made in military fashion, does not displease me."

"Oh, sire!" said the officer, "your majesty has ill understood me; I no longer claim anything now."

"Excess of delicacy, monsieur; but I will keep my eye upon your affairs, and hereafter——"

"Oh, sire! what a word!—hereafter! Thirty years have I lived upon that promising word, which has been pronounced by so many great persons, and which your mouth has, in its turn, just pronounced. Hereafter! that is how I have received a score of wounds, and how I have reached fifty-four years of age, without ever having had a louis in my purse, and without ever having met with a protector in my road—I, who have protected so many people! So I change my formula, sire; and when any one says to me '*Hereafter*,' I reply '*Now*.' It is repose I solicit, sire. That may be easily granted me. That will cost nobody anything."

"I did not look for this language, monsieur, particularly from a man who has always lived among the great. You forget you are speaking to the king, to a gentleman who is, I suppose, of as good a house as yourself; and when I say hereafter, I mean a certainty."

"I do not at all doubt it, sire; but this is the end of the terrible truth I had to tell you. If I were to see upon that table a *maréchal's* baton, the sword of constable, the crown of Poland, instead of *hereafter*, I swear to you, sire, that I should still say *Now*! Oh, excuse me, sire! I am from the country of your grandfather, Henry IV. I do not speak often; but when I do speak, I speak all."

"The future of my reign has little temptation for you, monsieur, it appears," said Louis, haughtily.

"Forgetfulness, forgetfulness everywhere!" cried the officer, with a noble air; "the master has forgotten the servant, so that the servant is reduced to forget his master. I live in unfortunate times, sire. I see youth full of discouragement and fear, I see it timid and despoiled, when it ought to be rich and powerful. I yesterday evening, for example, open the door to a king of England, whose father, humble as I am, I was near saving, if God had not been against me—God, who inspired his elect, Cromwell! I open, I said, the door, that is to say, of the palace of one brother to another brother, and I see—stop, sire, that presses upon my heart!—I see the minister of that king drive away the proscribed prince, and humiliate his master by condemning to want another king, his equal. Then I see my prince, who is young, handsome, and brave, who has courage in his heart and lightning in his eye,—I see him tremble before a priest, who laughs at him behind the curtains of his alcove, where he digests all the gold of France, which he afterwards stuffs into secret coffers. Yes,—I understand your looks, sire. I am bold to madness; but what is to be said? I am an old man, and I tell you here, sire, to you, my king, things which I would cram down the throat of any one who should dare to pronounce them before me. You have commanded me to pour out the bottom of my heart before you, sire, and I cast at the feet of your majesty the bile which I have been collecting during thirty years, as I would pour out all my blood, if your majesty commanded me to do so."

The king, without speaking a word, wiped the drops of cold and abundant sweat which trickled from his temples. The moment of silence which followed this vehement outbreak, represented for him who had spoken, and for him who had listened, ages of suffering.

"Monsieur," said the king at length, "you have pronounced the word forgetfulness. I have heard nothing but that word ; I will rely then, to it alone. Others have perhaps been able to forget, but I have not, and the proof is, that I remember that one day of riot, that one day in which the furious people, furious and roaring as the sea, invaded the royal palace ; that one day when I feigned to sleep in my bed, one man alone, naked sword in hand, concealed behind my bolster, watched over my life, ready to risk his own for me, as he had before risked it twenty times for the lives of my family. Was not the gentleman, whose name I then demanded, called M. d'Artagnan ? say, monsieur."

"Your majesty has a good memory," replied the officer, coldly.

"You see, then," continued the king, "if I have such remembrances of my childhood, what an amount I may gather in the age of reason."

"Your majesty has been richly endowed by God," said the officer, in the same tone.

"Come, Monsieur d'Artagnan," continued Louis, with feverish agitation, "ought you not to be as patient as I am ? Ought you not to do as I do ? Come !"

"And what do you do, sire ?"—"I wait."

"Your majesty may do so, because you are young ; but I, sire, have not time to wait ; old age is at my door, and death is behind it, looking into the very depths of my house. Your majesty is beginning life, its future is full of hope and fortune ; but I, sire, I am at the other side of the horizon, and we are so far from each other, that I should never have time to wait till your majesty came up to me."

Louis made another turn in his apartment, still wiping the sweat from his brow, in a manner that would have terrified his physicians, if his physicians had witnessed the state his majesty was in.

"It is very well, monsieur," said Louis XIV., in a sharp voice ; "you are desirous of having your discharge, and you shall have it. You offer me your resignation of the rank of lieutenant of the musketeers ?"

"I deposit it humbly at your majesty's feet, sire."

"That is sufficient. I will order your pension."

"I shall have a thousand obligations to your majesty."

"Monsieur," said the king, with a violent effort, "I think you are losing a good master."

"And I am sure of it, sire."

"Shall you ever find such another ?"

"Oh, sire ! I know that your majesty is alone in the world ; therefore will I never again take service with any king upon earth, and will never again have other master than myself."

"You say so ?"—"I swear so, your majesty."

"I shall remember that word, monsieur."—D'Artagnan bowed.

"And you know I have a good memory ?" said the king.

"Yes, sire ; and yet I should desire that that memory should fail your majesty in this instance, in order that you might forget all the miseries I have been forced to spread before your eyes. Your majesty is so much above the poor and the mean, that I hope—"

"My majesty, monsieur, will act like the sun, which looks upon all, great and small, rich and poor, giving lustre to some, warmth to others, life to all. Adieu, Monsieur d'Artagnan—adieu ; you are free."

And the king, with a hoarse sob, which was lost in his throat, passed quickly into the next chamber. D'Artagnan took up his hat from the table upon which he had thrown it, and went out.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE PROSCRIBED.

D'ARTAGNAN had not reached the bottom of the staircase, when the king called his gentleman. "I have a commission to give you, monsieur," said he.

"I am at your majesty's commands."

"Wait," then. And the young king began to write the following letter, which cost him more than one sigh, although, at the same time, something like a feeling of triumph glittered in his eyes :

"MONSIEUR LE CARDINAL,—Thanks to your good counsels, and, above all, thanks to your firmness, I have succeeded in overcoming a weakness unworthy of a king. You have too ably arranged my destiny to allow gratitude not to stop me at the moment I was about to destroy your work. I felt I was wrong to wish to make my life deviate from the course you had marked out for it. Certes, it would have been a misfortune to France and my family if a misunderstanding had taken place between me and my minister. This, however, would certainly have happened if I had made your niece my wife. I am perfectly aware of this, and will henceforth oppose nothing to the accomplishment of my destiny. I am prepared, then, to marry the infanta, Maria Theresa. You may at once open the conference.—Your affectionate  
"LOUIS."

The king, after reperusing the letter, sealed it himself. "This letter for monsieur le cardinal," said he.

The gentleman took it. At Mazarin's door he found Bernouin waiting with anxiety.

"Well?" asked the minister's *valet-de-chambre*.

"Monsieur," said the gentleman, "here is a letter for his eminence."

"A letter! Ah! we expected one, after the little journey of the morning."

"Oh! you know then that his majesty——"

"In quality of first minister, it belongs to the duties of our charge to know everything. And his majesty prays and implores, I presume."

"I don't know, but he sighed frequently whilst he was writing."

"Yes, yes, yes; we understand all that: people sigh sometimes from happiness as well as from grief, monsieur."

"And yet the king did not look very happy when he returned, monsieur."

"You did not see clearly. Besides, you only saw his majesty on his return, for he was only accompanied by the lieutenant of the guards. But I had his eminence's telescope; I looked through it when he was tired, and I am sure they both wept."

"Well! was it for happiness they wept?"

"No, but for love, and they vowed to each other a thousand tender-  
nesses, which the king asks no better than to keep. Now this letter is a commencement of the execution."

"And what does his eminence think of this love, which is, by-the-by, no secret to anybody?"

Bernouin took the gentleman by the arm, and whilst ascending the staircase,—  
"In confidence," said he, in a low voice, "his eminence looks for success in the affair. I know very well we shall have war with Spain; but, bah! war will please the nobles. Monsieur le cardinal, besides, can

endow his niece royally, nay, more than royally. There will be money, festivities, and fireworks—everybody will be delighted.”

“Well, for my part,” replied the gentleman, shaking his head, “it appears to me that this letter is very light to contain all that.”

“My friend,” replied Bernouin, “I am certain of what I tell you. M. d’Artagnan related all that passed to me.”

“Ay, ay ! and what did he tell you ? Let us hear.”

“I accosted him by asking him, on the part of the cardinal, if there were any news, without discovering my designs, observe, for the cardinal, if there is a cunning hand. ‘My dear Monsieur Bernouin,’ he replied, ‘the king is madly in love with Mademoiselle de Mancini, that is all,’ the tell you.’ And then I asked him : ‘do you think, to such a degree, have to will urge him to act contrary to the designs of his eminence ?’ ‘Ah ! don’t interrogate me,’ said he ; ‘I think the king capable of anything : he has a head of iron, and what he wills he wills in earnest. If he takes it into his head to marry Mademoiselle de Mancini, he will marry her, depend upon it.’ And thereupon he left me and went straight to the stables, took a horse, saddled it himself, jumped upon its back, and set off as if the devil were at his heels.”

“So that you believe, then——”

“I believe that monsieur the lieutenant of the guards knew more than he was willing to say.”

“In your opinion, then, M. d’Artagnan——”

“Is gone, according to all probability, after the exiles, to carry out all that can facilitate the success of the king’s love.”

Chatting thus, the two confidants arrived at the door of his eminence’s apartment. His eminence’s gout had left him, he was walking about his chamber in a state of great anxiety, listening to doors and looking out of windows. Bernouin entered, followed by the gentleman, who had orders from the king to place the letter in the hands of the cardinal himself. Mazarin took the letter, but before opening it, he got up a ready smile, a smile of circumstance, able to throw a veil over emotions of whatever sort they might be. So prepared, whatever was the impression received from the letter, no reflection of that impression was allowed to transpire upon his countenance.

“Well !” said he, when he had read and re-read the letter, “exceedingly well, monsieur. Inform the king that I thank him for his obedience to the wishes of the queen-mother, and that I will set about doing everything for the accomplishment of his will.”

The gentleman left the room. The door had scarcely closed before the cardinal, who had no mask for Bernouin, took off that with which he had so recently covered his face, and with a most dismal expression,—“Call M. de Brienne,” said he. Five minutes afterwards, the secretary entered.

“Monsieur,” said Mazarin, “I have just rendered a great service to the monarchy, the greatest I have ever rendered it. You will carry this letter, which proves it, to her majesty the queen-mother, and when she shall have returned it to you, you will lodge it in portfolio B, which is filled with documents and papers relative to my ministry.”

Brienne went as desired, and, as the letter was unsealed, did not fail to read it on his way. There is likewise no doubt that Bernouin, who was on good terms with everybody, approached so near to the secretary as to be able to read the letter over his shoulder ; so that the news spread with such activity through the castle, that Mazarin might have feared it would

reach the ears of the queen-mother before M. de Brienne could convey Louis XIV.'s letter to her. A moment after, orders were given for departure, and M. de Condé having been to pay his respects to the king, at his pretended rising, inscribed the city of Poitiers upon his tablets, as the place of sojourn and repose for their majesties. Thus in a few instants was unravelled an intrigue which had covertly occupied all the diplomacies of Europe. It had nothing, however, very clear as a result, but to make a poor lieutenant of musketeers lose his commission and his fortune. It is true that in exchange he gained his liberty. We shall soon know how M. d'Artagnan profited by this. For the moment, if the reader will permit us, we will return to the hostelry of *es Medici*, of which one of the windows opened at the very moment the orders were given for the departure of the king.

The window that opened was that of one of the chambers of Charles II. The unfortunate prince had passed the night in bitter reflections, his head supported by his hands, and his elbows on the table, whilst Parry, infirm and old, fatigued in body and in mind, had fallen asleep in a corner. A singular fortune was that of this faithful servant, who saw recommencing for the second generation, the fearful series of misfortunes which had weighed so heavily on the first. When Charles II. had well thought over the fresh defeat he had experienced, when he perfectly comprehended the complete isolation into which he had just fallen, on seeing his fresh hope left behind him, he was seized as with a vertigo, and sank back in the large *fauteuil* in which he was seated. Then God took pity on the unhappy prince, and sent to console him sleep, the innocent brother of death. He did not wake till half-past six, that is to say, till the sun shone brightly into his chamber, and Parry, motionless with the fear of waking him, was observing with profound grief the eyes of the young man already red with wakefulness, and his cheeks pale with suffering and privations.

At length the noise of some heavy carts descending towards the Loire awakened Charles. He arose, looked around him like a man who has forgotten everything, perceived Parry, shook him by the hand, and commanded him to settle the reckoning with Master Cropole. Master Cropole, being called upon to settle his account with Parry, acquitted himself, it must be allowed, like an honest man; he only made his customary remark, that the two travellers had eaten nothing, which had the double disadvantage of being humiliating for his kitchen, and of forcing him to ask payment for a repast not consumed, but not the less lost. Parry had nothing to say to the contrary, and paid.

"I hope," said the king, "it has not been the same with the horses. I don't see that they have eaten at your expense, and it would be a misfortune for travellers like us, who have a long journey to make, to have our horses fail us."

But Cropole, at this doubt, assumed his majestic air, and replied that the manger of *les Medici* was not less hospitable than its refectory.

The king mounted his horse; his old servant did the same, and both set out towards Paris, without meeting a single person on their road, in the streets or the faubourgs of the city. For the prince the blow was more severe, from being a fresh exile. The unfortunate clung to the smallest hopes, as the happy do to the greatest good; and when they are obliged to quit the place where that hope has soothed their hearts, they experience the mortal regret which the banished man feels when he places his foot upon the vessel which is to bear him into exile. It appears that the heart already wounded so many times suffers from the least scratch; it appears

that it considers as a good the momentary absence of evil, which is nothing but the absence of pain ; and that God, into the most terrible misfortunes, has thrown hope as the drop of water which the rich bad man in hell entertained of Lazarus.

For one instant even the hope of Charles II. had been more than a fugitive joy ;—that was when he found himself so kindly welcomed by his brother king ; then it had taken a form that had become a reality ; then, all at once, the refusal of Mazarin had reduced the factitious reality to the state of a dream. This promise of Louis XIV., so soon resumed, had been nothing but a mockery : a mockery like his crown—like his sceptre—like his friends—like all that had surrounded his royal childhood, and which had abandoned his proscribed youth. Mockery ! everything was a mockery for Charles II. except the cold, black repose promised by death.

Such were the ideas of the unfortunate prince while sitting listlessly upon his horse, to which he abandoned the reins : he rode slowly along beneath the warm sun of May, in which the sombre misanthropy of the exile perceived a last insult to his grief.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

“ REMEMBER ! ”

A HORSEMAN who passed rapidly along the road leading towards Blois, which he had left nearly half an hour before, crossed the two travellers, and, though apparently in haste, raised his hat as he passed them. The king scarcely observed this young man, who was about twenty-five years of age. Turning round several times, he made signals of kindness to a man standing before the gate of a handsome white-and-red house ; that is to say, built of brick and stone, with a slated roof, situated on the left hand of the road the prince was travelling.

This man, old, tall, and thin, with white hair,—we speak of him standing by the gate ;—this man replied to the farewell signals of the young one by signs of parting as tender as could have been made by a father. The young man disappeared at the first turning of the road, bordered by fine trees, and the old man was preparing to return to the house, when the two travellers, arriving in front of the gate, attracted his attention.

The king, we have said, was riding with his head cast down, his arms inert, leaving his horse to go what pace he liked, whilst Parry behind him, the better to imbibe the genial influence of the sun, had taken off his hat, and was looking about to the right and left. His eyes encountered those of the old man leaning against the gate, and who, as if struck by some strange spectacle, uttered an exclamation, and made one step towards the two travellers. From Parry his eyes immediately turned towards the king, upon whom they stopped for an instant. This examination, however rapid, was reflected instantly in a visible manner upon the features of the tall old man. For scarcely had he recognised the younger of the travellers—and we say recognised, for nothing but a perfect recognition could have explained such an act—scarcely, we say, had he recognized the younger of the two travellers, than he clapped his hands together, with respectful surprise, and, raising his hat from his head, bowed so profoundly that it might have been said he was kneeling. This demonstration, however absent, or rather, however absorbed was the king in his reflections, attracted his attention instantly ; and checking his horse, and turning towards Parry, he

exclaimed, "Good God, Parry, who is that man who salutes me in such a marked manner? can he know me, think you?"

Parry, much agitated and very pale, had already turned his horse towards the gate. "Ah, sire!" said he, stopping suddenly at five or six paces' distance from the still bending old man; "sire, I am seized with astonishment, for I think I recognise that brave man. Yes, it must be he! Will your majesty permit me to speak to him?"

"Certainly."

"Can it be you, Monsieur Grimaud?" asked Parry.

"Yes, it is," replied the tall old man, looking up without abating in his respectful attitude.

"Sire," then said Parry, "I was not deceived. This good man is the servant of the Comte de la Fère, and the Comte de la Fère, if you remember, is the worthy gentleman of whom I have so often spoken to your majesty that the remembrance of him must remain, not only in your mind, but in your heart."

"He who was present at the last moments of my father?" asked Charles, evidently affected at the remembrance.———"The same, sire."

"Alas!" said Charles; and then addressing Grimaud, whose penetrating and intelligent eyes seemed to search and divine his thoughts,— "My friend," said he, "does your master, Monsieur le Comte de la Fère, live in this neighbourhood?"

"There," replied Grimaud, pointing with his outstretched arm to the white-and-red house behind the gate.

"And is Monsieur le Comte de la Fère at home at present?"

"At the back, under the chestnut-trees."

"Parry," said the king, "I will not miss this opportunity, so precious for me, to thank the gentleman to whom our house is indebted for such a noble example of devotedness and generosity. Hold my horse, my friend, if you please." And, throwing the bridle to Grimaud, the king entered the abode of Athos, quite alone, as one equal enters the dwelling of another. Charles had been informed by the concise explanation of Grimaud,— "At the back, under the chestnut-trees;" he left, therefore, the house on the left, and went straight down the path indicated. The thing was easy; the tops of those noble trees, already covered with leaves and flowers, rose above all the rest. On arriving under the lozenges, by turns luminous and dark, which chequered the ground of this path according as the trees were more or less in leaf, the young prince perceived a gentleman walking with his arms behind him, apparently plunged in a profound reverie. Without doubt he had often had this gentleman described to him, for, without hesitating, Charles II. walked straight up to him. At the sound of his footsteps, the Comte de la Fère raised his head, and seeing an unknown of a noble and elegant carriage coming towards him, he raised his hat and waited. At some paces from him, Charles II. likewise took off his hat. Then, as if in reply to the comte's mute interrogation,—

"Monsieur le comte," said he, "I come to discharge a duty towards you. I have, for a long time, had the expression of a profound gratitude to bring you. I am Charles II., son of Charles Stuart, who reigned in England, and died on the scaffold."

On hearing this illustrious name, Athos felt a kind of shudder creep through his veins, but at the sight of the young prince standing uncovered before him and stretching out his hand towards him, two tears, for an instant, dimmed his brilliant eyes. He bent respectfully, but the prince took him by the hand.

"See how unfortunate I am, monsieur le comte ; it is only due to chance that I have met with you. Alas ! I ought to have people around me whom I love and honour, whereas I am reduced to preserve their services in my heart, and their names in my memory : so that if your servant had not recognized mine, I should have passed by your door as by that of a stranger."

"It is but too true," said Athos, replying with his voice to the first part of the king's speech, and with a bow to the second ; "it is but too true, indeed, that your majesty has seen many evil days."

"And the worst, alas !" replied Charles, "are perhaps still to come."

"Sire, let us hope."

"Comte, comte," continued Charles, shaking his head, "I entertained hope till last night, and that of a good Christian, I swear."

Athos looked at the king as if to interrogate him.

"Oh, the history is soon related," said Charles. "Proscribed, despoiled, disdained, I resolved, in spite of all my repugnance, to tempt fortune one last time. Is it not written above, that, for our family, all good fortune and all bad fortune shall eternally come from France ? You know something of that, monsieur,—you, who are one of the Frenchmen whom my unfortunate father found at the foot of his scaffold, on the day of his death, after having found them at his right hand on the day of battle."

"Sire," said Athos, modestly, "I was not alone. I and my companions did, under the circumstances, our duty as gentlemen, and that was all. Your majesty was about to do me the honour to relate——"

"That is true. I had the protection,—pardon my hesitation, comte, but, for a Stuart, you, who understand everything, you will comprehend that the word is hard to pronounce ;—I had, I say, the protection of my cousin the stadtholder of Holland ; but without the intervention, or at least without the authorisation of France, the stadtholder would not take the initiative. I came, then, to ask this authorisation of the king of France, who has refused me."

"The king has refused you, sire !"

"Oh, not he ; all justice must be rendered to my young brother Louis ; but Monsieur de Mazarin——"

Athos bit his lips.

"You perhaps think I had a right to expect this refusal?" said the king, who had remarked the movement.

"That was, in truth, my thought, sire," replied Athos, respectfully ; "I know that Italian of old."

"Then I determined to come to the test, and know at once the last word of my destiny. I told my brother Louis, that, not to compromise either France or Holland, I would tempt fortune myself in person, as I had already done, with two hundred gentlemen, if he would give them to me ; and a million, if he would lend it me."

"Well, sire?"

"Well, monsieur, I am suffering at this moment something strange, and that is, the satisfaction of despair. There is in certain souls,—and I have just discovered that mine is of the number,—a real satisfaction in that assurance : that all is lost, and the time is come to yield."

"Oh, I hope," said Athos, "that your majesty is not come to that extremity."

"To say so, monsieur le comte, to endeavour to revive hope in my heart, you must have ill understood what I have just told you. I came to Blois to ask of my brother Louis the alms of a million, with which I had the hopes of

re-establishing my affairs ; and my brother Louis has refused me. You see, then, plainly that all is lost."

"Will your majesty permit me to express a contrary opinion?"

"How is that, comte? Do you take me for a mind vulgar to such a degree as not to know how to confront my position?"

"Sire, I have always seen that it was in desperate positions that suddenly the great turns of fortune have taken place."

"Thank you, comte ; it is some comfort to meet with a heart like yours ; that is to say, sufficiently trustful in God and in monarchy, never to despair of a royal fortune, however low it may be fallen. Unfortunately, my dear comte, your words are like those remedies they call 'sovereign,' and which, notwithstanding, being only able to cure curable wounds or diseases, fail against death. Thank you for your perseverance in consoling me, comte, thanks for your devoted remembrance, but I know what I have to trust to,—nothing will save me now. And see, my friend, I was so convinced, that I was taking the route of exile, with my old Parry ; I was returning to devour my poignant griefs in the little hermitage offered me by Holland. There, believe me, comte, all will soon be over, and death will come quickly ; it is called for so often by this body, which the soul gnaws, and by this soul, which aspires to heaven."

"Your majesty has a mother, a sister, and brothers ; your majesty is the head of the family ; you ought, therefore, to ask a long life of God, instead of imploring him for a prompt death. Your majesty is proscribed, a fugitive, but you have right on your side ; you ought to aspire to combats, dangers, business, and not to the repose of the heavens."

"Comte," said Charles II., with a smile of indescribable sadness, "have you ever heard of a king who re-conquered his kingdom with one servant of the age of Parry, and with three hundred crowns which that servant carries in his purse?"

"No, sire ; but I have heard—and that more than once—that a de-throned king has recovered his kingdom with a firm will, perseverance, some friends, and a million skilfully employed."

"But you cannot have understood me. The million I asked of my brother Louis, he has refused me."

"Sire," said Athos, "will your majesty grant me a few minutes, and listen attentively to what remains for me to say to you?"

Charles II. looked earnestly at Athos. "Willingly, monsieur," said he.

"Then I will show your majesty the way," resumed the comte, directing his steps towards the house. He then conducted the king to his closet, and begged him to be seated. "Sire," said he, "your majesty just now told me that, in the present state of England, a million would suffice for the recovery of your kingdom."

"To attempt it at least, monsieur ; and to die as a king if I should not succeed."

"Well, then, sire, let your majesty, according to the promise you have made me, have the goodness to listen to what I have to say." Charles made an affirmative sign with his head. Athos walked straight up to the door, the bolts of which he drew, after having looked if anybody was near, and then returned. "Sire," said he, "your majesty has kindly remembered that I lent assistance to the very noble and very unfortunate Charles I., when his executioners conducted him from St. James's to Whitehall."

"Yes, certainly I do remember it, and always shall remember it."

"Sire, it is a dismal history for a son to listen to, and who no doubt has

had it related to him many times ; and yet I ought to repeat it to your majesty without omitting one detail."

"Speak on, monsieur."

"When the king your father ascended the scaffold, or rather when he passed from his chamber to the scaffold, even with his window, everything was prepared for his escape. The executioner was got out of the way ; a hole contrived under the floor of his apartment ; I myself was beneath the funeral vault, which I heard all at once creak beneath his feet."

"Parry has related to me all these terrible details, monsieur."

Athos bowed, and resumed. "But here is something he has not related to you, sire, for what follows passed between God, your father, and myself ; and never has the revelation of it been made even to my dearest friends. 'Go a little further off,' said the august patient to the executioner ; 'it is but for an instant, and I know that I belong to you ; but remember not to strike till I give the signal. I wish to offer up my prayers in freedom.'"

"Pardon me," said Charles II., turning very pale, "but you, comte, who know so many details of this melancholy event,—details which, as you said just now, have never been revealed to any one,—do you know the name of that infernal executioner, of that base wretch who concealed his face that he might assassinate a king with impunity?"

Athos became slightly pale. "His name?" said he ; "yes I know it, but cannot tell it."

"And what is become of him, for nobody in England knows his destiny?"

"He is dead."

"But he did not die in his bed ; he did not die a calm and peaceful death ; he did not die the death of the good?"

"He died a violent death, in a terrible night, rendered so by the passions of man and a tempest from God. His body, pierced by a poniard, sank to the depths of the ocean. God pardon his murderer!"

"Proceed, then," said Charles II., seeing that the comte was unwilling to say more.

"The king of England, after having, as I have said, spoken thus to the masked executioner, added :—'Observe, you will not strike till I shall stretch out my arms, saying—REMEMBER!'"

"I was aware," said Charles, in an agitated voice, "that that was the last word pronounced by my unfortunate father. But with what aim? for whom?"

"For the French gentleman placed beneath his scaffold."

"For you, then, monsieur?"

"Yes, sire ; and every one of the words which he spoke to me, through the planks of the scaffold covered with a black cloth, still sounds in my ears. The king knelt down on one knee : 'Comte de la Fère,' said he, 'are you there?' 'Yes, sire,' replied I. Then the king stooped towards the boards."

Charles II., also, palpitating with interest, burning with grief, stooped towards Athos, to catch, one by one, every word that escaped from him. His head touched that of the comte.

"Then," continued Athos, "the king stooped. 'Comte de la Fère,' said he, 'it was not possible for me to be saved by you : it was not to be. Now, even though I commit a sacrilege, I must speak to you. Yes, I have spoken to men—yes, I have spoken to God, and I speak to you the last. By sup-

porting a cause which I thought sacred, I have lost the throne of my fathers, and diverted the heritage of my children.'"

Charles II. concealed his face in his hands, and a bitter tear glided between his white and slender fingers.

"I have still a million left," continued the king. "I buried it in the vaults of the castle of Newcastle, a moment before I quitted that city." Charles raised his head with an expression of such painful joy as would have drawn tears from any one acquainted with his misfortunes.

"A million!" murmured he. "Oh, comte!"

"You alone know that this money exists: employ it when you think it can be of the greatest service to my eldest son. And now, Comte de la Fère, bid me adieu!"

"Adieu, adieu, sire!" cried I."

Charles arose, and went and leant his burning brow against the window.

"It was then," continued Athos, "the king pronounced the word 'REMEMBER!' addressed to me. You see, sire, that I have remembered."

The king could not resist or conceal his emotion. Athos beheld the movement of his shoulders, which undulated convulsively; he heard the sobs which burst from his overcharged breast. He was silent himself, suffocated by the flood of bitter remembrances he had just poured upon that royal head. Charles II., with a violent effort, left the window, devoured his tears, and came and re-seated himself by Athos. "Sire," said the latter, "I thought till to-day that the time was not yet arrived for the employment of that last resource; but, with my eyes fixed upon England, I thought it was approaching. To-morrow I meant to go and inquire in what part of the world your majesty was, and then I purposed going to you. You come to me, sire; that is an indication that God is with us."

"Monsieur," said Charles, in a voice choked by emotion, "you are, for me, what an angel sent from heaven would be,—you are a preserver, sent to me from the tomb of my father by himself; but, believe me, since ten years of civil war have passed over my country, striking down men, tearing up the soil, it is no more probable that gold should remain in the entrails of the earth, than love in the hearts of my subjects."

"Sire, the spot in which his majesty buried the million is well known to me, and no one, I am sure, has been able to discover it. Besides, is the castle of Newcastle quite destroyed? Have they demolished it stone by stone, and uprooted the soil to the last tree?"

"No, it is still standing; but at this moment General Monk occupies it, and is encamped there. The only spot from which I could look for succour, where I possess a single resource, you see, is invaded by my enemies."

"General Monk, sire, cannot have discovered the treasure I speak of."

"Yes, but can I go and deliver myself up to Monk in order to recover this treasure? Ah! comte, you see plainly I must yield to destiny, since it strikes me to the earth every time I rise. What can I do with Parry as my only servant, with Parry, whom Monk has already driven from his presence? No, no, no, comte, we must yield to this blow."

"But what your majesty cannot do, and what Parry can no more attempt, do you not believe that I could succeed in?"

"You—you, comte—you would go?"

"If it pleases your majesty," said Athos, bowing to the king, "yes, I will go, sire."

"What! you, who are so happy here, comte?"

"I am never happy when I have a duty left to accomplish, and it is an

imperative duty which the king your father left me to watch over your fortunes, and make a royal use of his money. So, if your majesty honours me with a sign, I will go with you."

"Ah, monsieur!" said the king, forgetting all royal etiquette, and throwing his arms round the neck of Athos, "you prove to me that there is a God in heaven, and that this God sometimes sends messengers to the unfortunate who groan upon the earth."

Athos, exceedingly moved by this burst of feeling of the young man, thanked him with profound respect, and approached the window. "Grimaud!" cried he, "bring out my horses."

"What, now—immediately!" said the king. "Ah, monsieur, you are indeed a wonderful man!"

"Sire," said Athos, "I know of nothing more pressing than your majesty's service. Besides," added he, smiling, "it is a habit contracted long since, in the service of the queen your aunt, and of the king your father. How is it possible for me to lose it at the moment your majesty's service calls for it?"

"What a man!" murmured the king.

Then, after a moment's reflection,—"But no, comte, I cannot expose you to such privations. I have no means of rewarding such services."

"Bah!" said Athos, laughing. "Your majesty is joking; have you not a million? Ah! why am I not possessed of the half of such a sum! I would already have raised a regiment. But, thank God! I have still a few rouleaux of gold and some family diamonds left. Your majesty will, I hope, deign to share with a devoted servant."

"With a friend—yes, comte, but on condition that, in his turn, that friend will share with me hereafter."

"Sire," said Athos, opening a casket, from which he drew both gold and jewels; "you see, sire, we are too rich. Fortunately, there are four of us, in the event of meeting with thieves."

Joy made the blood rush to the pale cheeks of Charles II., as he saw Athos's two horses, led by Grimaud, already booted for the journey, advance towards the peristyle.

"Blaisois, this letter for the Vicomte de Bragelonne. For everybody else, I am gone to Paris. I confide the house to you, Blaisois." Blaisois bowed, shook hands with Grimaud, and shut the gate.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IN WHICH ARAMIS IS SOUGHT FOR, AND ONLY BAZIN FOUND.

Two hours had scarcely passed away after the departure of the master of the house, who, in Blaisois' sight, had taken the road to Paris, when a cavalier, mounted on a good pied-horse, stopped before the gate, and with a sonorous "*holà!*" called the horse-boys, who, with the gardeners, had formed a circle round Blaisois, the historian-in-ordinary to the household of the château. This "*holà!*" doubtless well known to Master Blaisois, made him turn his head and exclaim—"Monsieur d'Artagnan! run quickly, you chaps, and open the gate."

A swarm of eight brisk lads flew to the gate, which was opened as if it had been made of feathers; and every one loaded him with attentions, for they knew the welcome this friend was accustomed to receive from their master; and for such remarks the eye of the valet may always be depended upon.

"Ah!" said M. d'Artagnan, with an agreeable smile, balancing himself upon his stirrup to jump to the ground, "where is my dear comte?"

"Ah! how unfortunate you are, monsieur!" said Blaisois; "and how unfortunate will monsieur le comte, our master, think himself when he hears of your coming! By bad luck, monsieur le comte left home two hours ago."

D'Artagnan did not trouble himself about such trifles. "Very good!" said he. "You always speak the best French in the world; you shall give me a lesson in grammar and correct language, whilst I await the return of your master."

"That is impossible, monsieur," said Blaisois; "you would have to wait too long."

"Will he not come back to-day, then?"

"No, nor to-morrow, nor the day after to-morrow. Monsieur le comte is gone a journey."

"A journey!" said D'Artagnan, surprised; "that's a fable, Master Blaisois."

"Monsieur, it is no more than the truth. Monsieur has done me the honour to commit the house to my charge; and he added, with his voice so full of authority and kindness—that is all one to me: 'You will say I am gone to Paris.'"

"Well!" cried D'Artagnan, "since he is gone towards Paris, that is all I wanted to know! you should have told me so at first, booby! He is then two hours in advance?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I shall soon overtake him. Is he alone?"

"No, monsieur."

"Who is with him, then?"

"A gentleman whom I don't know, an old man, and M. Grimaud."

"Such a party cannot travel as fast as I can—I will start."

"Will monsieur listen to me an instant?" said Blaisois, laying his hand gently on the reins of the horse.

"Yes, if you don't favour me with fine speeches, and make haste."

"Well, then, monsieur, that word Paris appears to me to be only a lure."

"Oh, oh!" said D'Artagnan, seriously, "a lure, eh?"

"Yes, monsieur: and monsieur le comte is not going to Paris I will swear."

"What makes you think so?"

"This:—M. Grimaud always knows where our master is going; and he had promised me that the first time he went to Paris, he would take a little money for me to my wife."

"What, have you a wife, then?"

"I had one—she was of this country; but monsieur thought her a noisy scold, and I sent her to Paris: it is sometimes inconvenient, but very agreeable at others."

"I understand; but go on. You do not believe the comte is gone to Paris?"

"No, monsieur; for then M. Grimaud would have broken his word, he would have been perjured—and that is impossible."

"That is impossible," repeated D'Artagnan, quite in a study, because he was quite convinced. "Well, my brave Blaisois, many thanks to you." Blaisois bowed.

"Come, you know I am not curious—I have serious business with your

master. Could you not, by a little end of a word—you, who speak so well—give me to understand—one syllable only—I will guess the rest.’

“Upon my word, monsieur, I cannot. I am quite ignorant where monsieur le comte is gone to. As to listening at doors, that is contrary to my nature; and besides, it is forbidden here.’

“My dear lad,” said D’Artagnan, “this is a very bad beginning for me. Never mind; you know when monsieur le comte will return, at least?”

“As little, monsieur, as the place of his destination.”

“Come, Blaisois, come, search.”

“Monsieur doubts my sincerity? Ah, monsieur, that grieves me sensibly.”

“The devil take his gilded tongue!” grumbled D’Artagnan. “A clown with a word would be worth a dozen of him. Adieu!”

“Monsieur, I have the honour to present you my respects.”

“*Cuistre!*” said D’Artagnan to himself, “the fellow is insupportable.” He gave another look up to the house, turned his horse’s head, and set off like a man who has nothing either annoying or embarrassing in his mind. When he was at the end of the wall, and out of sight,—“Well now, I wonder,” said he, breathing quickly, “whether Athos was at home. No; all those idlers, standing with their arms crossed, would have been at work if the eye of the master was near. Athos gone a journey?—that is incomprehensible. Bah! it is all devilish mysterious! And then—no—he is not the man I want. I want one of a cunning, patient mind. My business is at Melun, in a certain presbytery I am acquainted with. Forty-five leagues—four days and a half! Well, it is fine weather, and I am free. Never mind distance!”

And he put his horse into a trot, directing his course towards Paris. On the fourth day he alighted at Melun, as he had intended.

D’Artagnan was never accustomed to ask anybody the road, or for any common information. For these sorts of details, unless in very serious circumstances, he confided in his perspicacity, which was so seldom at fault, in his experience of thirty years, and in a great habit of reading the physiognomies of houses, as well as those of men. At Melun, D’Artagnan directly found the presbytery,—a charming house, plastered over red brick, with vines climbing along the gutters, and a cross, in sculptured stone, surmounting the ridge of the roof. From the ground-floor of this house, escaped a noise, or rather a confusion of voices, like the chirping of young birds when the brood is just hatched under the down. One of these voices was spelling the alphabet distinctly. A voice, thick, but yet pleasant, at the same time scolded the talkers and corrected the faults of the reader. D’Artagnan recognised that voice, and, as the window of the ground-floor was open, he leant down from his horse under the branches and red fibres of the vine, and cried, “Bazin, my dear Bazin! good day to you.”

A short fat man, with a flat face, a cranium ornamented with a crown of grey hairs, cut short, in imitation of a tonsure, and covered with an old black velvet cap, arose as soon as he heard D’Artagnan—we ought not to say *arose*, but *bounded up*. In fact, Bazin bounded up, drawing with him his little low chair, which the children tried to take away, with battles more fierce than those of the Greeks endeavouring to recover the body of Patroclus from the hands of the Trojans. Bazin did more than bound; he let fall both his alphabet and his ferule. “You!” said he; “you, Monsieur d’Artagnan?”

“Yes, myself! Where is Aramis—no, M. le Chevalier d’Herblay—no, I am still mistaken—Monsieur le Vicaire-Général?”

"Ah ! monsieur," said Bazin, with dignity, "monseigneur is at his diocese."

"What did you say ?" said D'Artagnan.

Bazin repeated the sentence.

"Ah, ah ! but has Aramis a diocese ?"

"Yes, monsieur. Why not ?"

"Is he a bishop, then ?"

"Why, where can you come from," said Bazin, rather irreverently, "that you don't know that ?"

"My dear Bazin, we pagans, we men of the sword, know very well when a man is made a colonel, or *mestre-de-camp*, or *maréchal* of France ; but if he be made bishop, archbishop, or pope—devil take me, if the news reaches us before the three quarters of the earth have had the advantage of it !"

"Hush ! hush !" said Bazin, opening his eyes ; "do not spoil these poor children, in whom I am endeavouring to inculcate such good principles." In fact, the children had surrounded D'Artagnan, whose horse, long sword, spurs, and martial air, they very much admired. But above all, they admired his strong voice ; so that, when he uttered his oath, the whole school cried out, "The devil take me !" with fearful bursts of laughter, shouts, and stamping, as delighted the musketeer, and bewildered the old pedagogue.

"There !" said he, "hold your tongues, you brats ! You are come, M. d'Artagnan, and all my good principles fly away. With you, as usual, comes disorder. Babel is revived. Ah ! good Lord ! Ah ! the wild little wretches !" And the worthy Bazin distributed right and left blows which redoubled the cries of his scholars by making them change the nature of them.

"At least," said he, "you can no more debauch any one here."

"Do you think so ?" said D'Artagnan, with a smile which made a shudder creep over the shoulders of Bazin.

"He is capable of it," murmured he.

"Where is your master's diocese ?"

"Monseigneur René is bishop of Vannes."

"Who caused him to be nominated ?"

"Why, monsieur le surintendant, our neighbour."

"What ! Monsieur Fouquet ?"

"To be sure he did."

"Is Aramis on good terms with him, then ?"

"Monseigneur preached every Sunday at the house of monsieur le surintendant at Vaux ; then they hunted together."

"Ah !"

"And monseigneur composed his homilies—no, I mean his sermon with monsieur le surintendant."

"Bah ! he preached in verse, then, this worthy bishop ?"

"Monsieur, for the love of heaven, do not jest with sacred things."

"There, Bazin, there ! So then Aramis is at Vannes ?"

"At Vannes, in Bretagne."

"You are a deceitful old hunk, Bazin ; that is not true."

"See, monsieur, if you please ; the apartments of the presbytery are empty."

"He is right there," said D'Artagnan, looking attentively at the house, the aspect of which announced solitude.

"But monseigneur must have written you an account of his promotion."

"From when does it date?"—"A month back."

"Oh! then there is no time lost. Aramis cannot yet have wanted me. But how is it, Bazin, you do not follow your master?"

"Monsieur, I cannot; I have occupations."

"Your alphabet?"

"And my penitents."

"What do you confess, then? Are you a priest?"

"The same as one. I have such a call."

"But the orders?"

"Oh," said Bazin, without hesitation, "now that *monseigneur* is a bishop, I shall soon have my orders, or at least my dispensations." And he rubbed his hands.

"Decidedly," said D'Artagnan to himself, "there will be no means of uprooting these people. Get me some supper, Bazin."

"With pleasure, monsieur."

"A fowl, a *bouillon*, and a bottle of wine."

"This is Saturday, monsieur—it is a *jour maigre*."

"I have a dispensation," said D'Artagnan.

Bazin looked at him suspiciously.

"Ah, ah, master hypocrite!" said the musketeer, "for whom do you take me? If you, who are the valet, hope for dispensation for committing a crime, shall not I, the friend of your bishop, have dispensation for eating meat at the call of my stomach? Make yourself agreeable with me, Bazin, or, by heavens! I will complain to the king, and you shall never confess. Now, you know that the nomination of bishops rests with the king,—I have the king, I am the stronger."

Bazin smiled hypocritically. "Ah, but we, we have *monsieur le surintendant*," said he.

"And you laugh at the king, then?"

Bazin made no reply; his smile was sufficiently eloquent.

"My supper," said D'Artagnan, "it is getting towards seven o'clock."

Bazin turned round and ordered the eldest of the pupils to inform the cook. In the mean time, D'Artagnan surveyed the presbytery.

"Pugh!" said he, disdainfully, "*monseigneur* lodged his grandeur but very meanly here."

"We have the Château de Vaux," said Bazin.

"Which is perhaps equal to the Louvre?" said D'Artagnan, jeeringly.

"Which is better," replied Bazin, with the greatest coolness imaginable

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan.

He would perhaps have prolonged the discussion, and maintained the superiority of the Louvre, but the lieutenant perceived that his horse remained fastened to the bars of a gate.

"The devil!" said he. "Get my horse looked after; your master the *surintendant* has none like him in his stables."

Bazin cast a sidelong glance at the horse, and replied, "*Monsieur le surintendant* gave him four from his own stables; and each of the four is worth four of yours."

The blood mounted to the face of D'Artagnan. His hand itched, and his eye glanced over the head of Bazin, to select the place upon which he should discharge his anger. But it passed away; reflection came, and D'Artagnan contented himself with saying:

"The devil! the devil! I have done well to quit the service of the king. Tell me, worthy Master Bazin," added he, "how many musketeers does *monsieur le surintendant* retain in his service?"

"He could have all there are in the kingdom with his money," replied Bazin, closing his book, and dismissing the boys with some kindly stripes of his cane.

"The devil ! the devil !" repeated D'Artagnan, once more, as if to annoy the pedagogue. But as supper was now announced, he followed the cook, who introduced him into the refectory, where it awaited him. D'Artagnan placed himself at table, and commenced a hearty attack upon his fowl.

"It appears to me," said D'Artagnan, biting with all his might at the tough fowl they had served up to him, and which they had evidently forgotten to fatten,— "it appears to me that I have done wrong in not going to take service in the suite of that master yonder. A powerful noble this intendant, seemingly ! In good truth, we poor fellows know nothing at the court, and the rays of the sun prevent our seeing the large stars, which are suns also, at a little greater distance from our earth,—that is all."

As D'Artagnan delighted, both from pleasure and system, in making people talk about things which interested him, he fenced in his best style with Master Bazin, but it was pure loss of time ; beyond the fatiguing and hyperbolic praises of monsieur le surintendant of the finances, Bazin, who, on his side, was on his guard, afforded nothing but platitudes to the curiosity of D'Artagnan, so that our musketeer, in a tolerably bad humour, desired to go to bed as soon as he had supped. D'Artagnan was introduced by Bazin into a mean chamber, in which there was as poor a bed ; but D'Artagnan was not fastidious in that respect. He had been told that Aramis had taken away the key of his own private apartment, and as he knew Aramis was a very particular man, and had generally many things to conceal in his apartment, that had not at all astonished him. He had, therefore, although it appeared comparatively even harder, attacked the bed as bravely as he had done the fowl ; and, as he had as good an inclination to sleep as he had had to eat, he took scarcely longer time to be snoring harmoniously than he had employed in picking the last bones of the bird.

Since he was no longer in the service of any one, D'Artagnan had promised himself to indulge in sleeping as soundly as he had formerly slept lightly ; but with whatever good faith D'Artagnan had made himself this promise, and whatever desire he might have to keep it religiously, he was awakened in the middle of the night by a loud noise of carriages, and servants on horseback. A sudden illumination flashed over the walls of his chamber ; he jumped out of bed and ran to the window in his shirt.

"Can the king be coming this way ?" thought he, rubbing his eyes ; "in truth, such a suite can only be attached to royalty."

"*Vive Monsieur le Surintendant !*" cried, or rather vociferated, from a window on the ground-floor, a voice which he recognised as Bazin's, who, whilst so crying, waved a handkerchief with one hand, and held a large candle in the other. D'Artagnan then saw something like a brilliant human form leaning out at the window of the principal carriage ; at the same time loud bursts of laughter, provoked no doubt by the strange figure of Bazin, and which issued from the same carriage, left, as it were, a train of joy upon the passage of the rapid *cortège*.

"I might easily see it was not the king," said D'Artagnan ; "people don't laugh so heartily when the king passes. *Hoh !* Bazin !" cried he to his neighbour, who was still leaning three parts out of the window, to follow the carriage with his eyes as long as he could. "What is all that about ?"

"It is M. Fouquet," replied Bazin, in a patronising tone.

"And all his people ?"

"That is the court of M. Fouquet."

"Oh, oh!" said D'Artagnan; "what would M. de Mazarin say to that if he heard it?" And he returned to his truckle-bed, asking himself how Aramis always contrived to be protected by the most powerful persons in the kingdom. "Is it that he has more luck than I, or that I am a greater fool than he? Bah!" That was the concluding word by the aid of which D'Artagnan, become wise, now terminated every thought and every period of his style. Formerly he said, "*Mordioux!*" which was a prick of the spur, but now he had become older, he murmured that philosophical "*Bah!*" which served as a bridle to all the passions.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN SEEKS FOR PORTHOS, AND ONLY FINDS MOUSQUETON.

WHEN D'Artagnan had perfectly convinced himself that the absence of the Vicairc-Général d'Herblay was real, and that his friend was not to be found at Melun or in its environs, he left Bazin without regret, gave an ill-natured glance at the magnificent Château de Vaux, which was beginning to shine with that splendour which brought on its ruin, and, compressing his lips like a man full of mistrust and suspicion, he put spurs to his pied horse, saying, "Well, well! I have still Pierrefonds left, and there I shall find the best man and the best-filled coffer. And that is all I want, for I have an idea of my own."

We will spare our readers the prosaic incidents of D'Artagnan's journey, which terminated on the morning of the third day within sight of Pierrefonds. D'Artagnan came by the way of Nanteuil-le-Hardouin and Crépy. At a distance he perceived the Castle d'Orléans, which, having become part of the crown domain, was kept by an old *concierge*. This was one of those marvellous manors of the middle ages, with walls twenty feet in thickness, and a hundred in height. D'Artagnan rode slowly past its walls, measured its towers with his eyes, and descended into the valley. From a distance he looked down upon the château of Porthos, situated on the shores of a small lake, and contiguous to a magnificent forest. It was the same place we have already had the honour of describing to our readers; we shall therefore satisfy ourselves with naming it. The first thing D'Artagnan perceived after the fine trees, the sun of May gilding the sides of the green hills, long rows of feather-topped wood which stretched out towards Compiègne, was a large rolling box, pushed forward by two servants and dragged by two others. In this box there was an enormous green-and-gold thing, which stole along the smiling glades of the park, thus dragged and pushed. This thing, at a distance, was not to be made out, and signified absolutely nothing; nearer, it was a tun muffled in gold-bound green cloth; when close, it was a man, or rather a *poussa*, the inferior extremity of which, spreading over the interior of the box, entirely filled it; when still closer, the man was Mousqueton—Mousqueton, with grey hair and a face as red as Punchinello's.

"*Pardieu!*" cried D'Artagnan; "why, that's my dear Monsieur Mousqueton!"

"Ah!" cried the fat man—"ah! what happiness! what joy! There's M. d'Artagnan. Stop, you rascals!" These last words were addressed to the lackeys who pushed and dragged him. The box stopped, and the four

lackeys, with a precision quite military, took off their laced hats and ranged themselves behind it.

"Oh, Monsieur d'Artagnan !" said Mousqueton ; "why can I not embrace your knees ? But I am become impotent, as you see."

"*Dame !* my dear Mousqueton, it is age."

"No, monsieur, it is not age ; it is infirmities—troubles."

"Troubles ! you, Mousqueton ?" said D'Artagnan, making the tour of the box ; "are you out of your mind, my dear friend ? Thank God ! you are as hearty as a three-hundred-year-old oak."

"Ah ! but my legs, monsieur, my legs !" groaned the faithful servant.

"What's the matter with your legs ?"

"Oh, they will no longer bear me !"

"Ah, the ingrates ! And yet you feed them well, Mousqueton, apparently."

"Alas, yes ! They have nothing to reproach me with in that respect," said Mousqueton, with a sigh ; "I have always done what I could for my poor body ; I am not selfish." And Mousqueton sighed afresh.

"I wonder whether Mousqueton wants to be a baron too, as he sighs after that fashion ?" thought D'Artagnan.

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur !" said Mousqueton, as if rousing himself from a painful reverie ; "how happy monseigneur will be that you have thought of him !"

"Kind Porthos !" cried D'Artagnan, "I am anxious to embrace him."

"Oh !" said Mousqueton, much affected, "I will certainly write to him."

"How !" cried D'Artagnan, "you will write to him ?"

"This very day ; I will not delay it an hour."

"Is he not here, then ?"

"No, monsieur."

"But is he near at hand ?—is he far off ?"

"Oh, can I tell, monsieur, can I tell ?"

"*Mordieux !*" cried the musketeer, stamping with his foot, "I am unfortunate. Porthos such a stay-at-home !"

"Monsieur, there is not a more sedentary man than monseigneur ; but——"

"But what ?"

"When a friend presses you——"

"A friend ?"

"Doubtless—the worthy M. d'Herblay."

"What, has Aramis pressed Porthos ?"

"This is how the thing happened, Monsieur D'Artagnan. M. d'Herblay wrote to monseigneur——"

"Indeed !"

"A letter, monsieur, such a pressing letter that it threw us all into a bustle."

"Tell me all about it, my dear friend," said D'Artagnan ; "but remove these people a little further off first."

Mousqueton shouted, "Fall back, you sirs !" with such powerful lungs that the breath, without the words, would have been sufficient to disperse the four lackeys. D'Artagnan seated himself on the shaft of the box and opened his ears. "Monsieur," said Mousqueton, "monseigneur, then, received a letter from M. le Vicaire-Général d'Herblay, eight or nine days ago ; it was the day of *champêtre* pleasures,—yes, it must have been Wednesday."

"What means that?" said D'Artagnan. "The day of *champêtre* pleasures?"

"Yes, monsieur; we have so many pleasures to take in this delightful country, that we were encumbered by them; so much so, that we have been forced to regulate the distribution of them."

"How easily do I recognise Porthos' love of order in that! Now, that idea would never have occurred to me; but then I am not encumbered with pleasures."

"We were, though," said Mousqueton.

"And how did you regulate the matter, let me know?" said D'Artagnan.

"It is rather long, monsieur."

"Never mind, we have plenty of time; and you speak so well, my dear Mousqueton, that it is really a pleasure to hear you."

"It is true," said Mousqueton, with a sigh of satisfaction, which emanated evidently from the justice which had been rendered him, "it is true I have made great progress in the company of monseigneur."

"I am waiting for the distribution of the pleasures, Mousqueton, and with impatience. I want to know if I have arrived on a lucky day."

"Oh, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Mousqueton, in a melancholy tone, "since monseigneur's departure all the pleasures are gone too!"

"Well, my dear Mousqueton, refresh your memory."

"With what day shall I begin?"

"Eh, *pardieu*! begin with Sunday, that is the Lord's day."

"Sunday, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"Sunday pleasures are religious: monseigneur goes to mass, makes the bread-offering, and has discourses and instructions made to him by his almoner-in-ordinary. That is not very amusing, but we expect a Carmelite from Paris who will do the duty of our almonry, and who, we are assured, speaks very well, which will keep us awake, whereas our present almoner always sends us to sleep. These are Sunday religious pleasures. On Monday, worldly pleasures."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan, "what do you mean by that? Let us have a glimpse at your worldly pleasures."

"Monsieur, on Monday we go into the world; we pay and receive visits, we play on the lute, we dance, we make verses, and burn a little incense in honour of the ladies."

"*Peste*! that is the height of gallantry," said the musketeer, who was obliged to call to his aid all the strength of his mastoid muscles to suppress an enormous inclination to laugh.

"Tuesday, learned pleasures."

"Good!" cried D'Artagnan. "What are they? Detail them, my dear Mousqueton."

"Monseigneur has bought a sphere or globe, which I will show you; it fills all the perimeter of the great tower, except a gallery which he has had built over the sphere: there are little strings and brass wires to which the sun and moon are hooked. It all turns; and that is very beautiful. Monseigneur points out to me seas and distant countries. We don't intend to visit them, but it is very interesting."

"Interesting! yes, that's the word," repeated D'Artagnan. "And Wednesday?"

"*Champêtre* pleasures, as I have had the honour to tell you, monsieur le chevalier. We look over monseigneur's sheep and goats; we make the shepherds dance to pipes and reeds, as is written in a book monseigneur

has in his library, which is called 'Bergeries.' The author died about a month ago."

"Monsieur Racan, perhaps," said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that was his name—M. Racan. But that is not all: we angle in the little canal, after which we dine, crowned with flowers. That is Wednesday."

"*Peste !*" said D'Artagnan; "you don't divide your pleasures badly. And Thursday?—what can be left for poor Thursday?"

"It is not very unfortunate, monsieur," said Mousqueton, smiling. "Thursday, Olympic pleasures. Ah, monsieur, that is superb! We get together all monseigneur's young vassals, and we make them throw the disc, wrestle, and run races. Monseigneur can't run now, no more can I; but monseigneur throws the disc as nobody else can throw it. And when he does deal a blow, oh, that proves a misfortune!"

"How so?"

"Yes, monsieur, we were obliged to renounce the cestus. He cracked heads; he broke jaws—beat in ribs. It was charming sport; but nobody was willing to play with him."

"Then his wrist——"

"Oh, monsieur, more firm than ever. Monseigneur gets a little weaker in his legs,—he confesses that himself; but his strength has all taken refuge in his arms, so that——"

"So that he can knock down bullocks, as he used formerly."

"Monsieur, better than that—he beats in walls. Lately, after having supped with one of our farmers—you know how popular and kind monseigneur is—after supper, as a joke, he struck the wall a blow. The wall crumbled away beneath his hand, the roof fell, and three men and an old woman were stifled."

"Good God, Mousqueton! And your master?"

"Oh, monseigneur, his head had a little skin rubbed off. We bathed the wounds with the water which the monks give us. But there was nothing the matter with his hand."

"Nothing?"

"No, nothing, monsieur."

"Deuce take the Olympic pleasures! They must cost your master too dear; for widows and orphans——"

"They all had pensions, monsieur; a tenth of monseigneur's revenue was spent in that way."

"Then pass on to Friday," said D'Artagnan.

"Friday, noble and warlike pleasures. We hunt, we fence, we dress falcons and break horses. Then, Saturday is the day for intellectual pleasures: we furnish our minds; we look at monseigneur's pictures and statues; we write, even, and trace plans; and then we fire monseigneur's cannon."

"You draw plans, and fire cannon?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Why, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "M. du Valon, in truth, possesses the most subtle and amiable mind that I know. But there is one kind of pleasure you have forgotten, it appears to me."

"What is that, monsieur?" asked Mousqueton, with anxiety.

"The material pleasures."

Mousqueton coloured. "What do you mean by that, monsieur?" said he, casting down his eyes.

"I mean the table—good wine—evenings occupied in the circulation of the bottle."

"Ah, monsieur, we don't reckon those pleasures,—we practise them every day."

"My brave Mousqueton," resumed D'Artagnan, "pardon me, but I was so absorbed in your charming recital that I have forgotten the principal object of our conversation, which was to learn what M. le Vicaire-Général d'Herblay could have to write to your master about?"

"That is true, monsieur," said Mousqueton; "the pleasures have misled us. Well, monsieur, this is the whole affair."

"I am all attention, Mousqueton."

"On Wednesday——"

"The day of the *champêtre* pleasures?"

"Yes——a letter arrived; he received it from my hands. I had recognised the writing."

"Well?"

"Monseigneur read it and cried out, 'Quick, my horses! my arms!'"

"Oh, good Lord! then it was for some duel?" said D'Artagnan.

"No, monsieur, there were only these words: 'Dear Porthos, set out, if you would wish to arrive before the Equinox. I expect you.'"

"*Mordieux!*" said D'Artagnan, thoughtfully, "that is pressing, apparently."

"I think so; therefore," continued Mousqueton, "monseigneur set out the very same day with his secretary, in order to endeavour to arrive in time."

"And did he arrive in time?"

"I hope so. Monseigneur, who is hasty, as you know, monsieur, repeated unceasingly, '*Tonne Dieu!* What can this mean? The Equinox? Never mind, the fellow must be well mounted if he arrives before I do.'"

"And ~~you~~ think Porthos will have arrived first, do you?" asked D'Artagnan.

"I am sure of it. This Equinox, however rich he may be, has certainly no horses so good as monseigneur's."

D'Artagnan repressed his inclination to laugh, because the brevity of Aramis's letter gave rise to reflection. He followed Mousqueton, or rather Mousqueton's chariot, to the castle. He sat down to a sumptuous table, of which they did him the honours as to a king. But he could draw nothing from Mousqueton,—the faithful servant seemed to shed tears at will, but that was all.

D'Artagnan, after a night passed in an excellent bed, reflected much upon the meaning of Aramis's letter; puzzled himself as to the relation of the Equinox with the affairs of Porthos; and being unable to make anything out, unless it concerned some *amour* of the bishop's, for which it was necessary that the days and nights should be equal, D'Artagnan left Pierrefonds as he had left Melun, as he had left the château of the Comte de la Fère. It was not, however, without a melancholy, which might by good right pass for one of the dullest of D'Artagnan's humours. His head cast down, his eyes fixed, he suffered his legs to hang on each side of his horse, and said to himself, in that vague sort of reverie which ascends sometimes to the sublimest eloquence:

"No more friends! no more future! no more anything! My energies are broken like the bonds of our ancient friendship. Oh, old age arrives, cold and inexorable; it envelops in its funeral crape all that was brilliant, all that was embalming in my youth; then it throws that sweet burthen on its shoulders and carries it away with the rest into the fathomless gulf of death."

A shudder crept through the heart of the Gascon, so brave and so strong against all the misfortunes of life ; and during some moments, the clouds appeared black to him, the earth slippery and full of pits as that of cemeteries.

"Whither am I going ?" said he to himself. "What am I going to do ! Alone, quite alone—without family, without friends ! Bah !" cried he all at once. And he clapped spurs to his horse, who, having found nothing melancholy in the heavy oats of Pierrefonds, profited by this permission to show his gaiety in a gallop which absorbed two leagues. "To Paris !" said D'Artagnan to himself. And on the morrow he alighted in Paris. He had devoted six days to this journey.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### WHAT D'ARTAGNAN WENT TO DO IN PARIS.

THE lieutenant dismounted before a shop in the Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the *Pilon d'Or*. A man of good appearance, wearing a white apron, and stroking his grey moustache with a large hand, uttered a cry of joy on perceiving the pied horse. "Monsieur le chevalier," said he, "ah, is that you ?"

"*Bon jour*, Planchet," replied D'Artagnan, stooping to enter the shop.

"Quick, somebody," cried Planchet, "to look after Monsieur d'Artagnan's horse,—somebody to get ready his chamber,—somebody to prepare his supper."

"Thanks, Planchet. Good day, my children," said D'Artagnan to the eager boys.

"Allow me to send off this coffee, this treacle, and these raisins," said Planchet ; "they are for the office of monsieur le surintendant."

"Send them off, send them off !"

"That is only the affair of a moment, then we will sup."

"Order so that we may sup alone ; I want to speak to you."

Planchet looked at his old master in a significant manner.

"Oh, be at ease, it is nothing unpleasant," said D'Artagnan.

"So much the better—so much the better !" And Planchet breathed freely again, whilst D'Artagnan seated himself quietly down in the shop, upon a bale of corks, and took connaissance of the localities. The shop was well stocked ; there was a mingled perfume of ginger, cinnamon, and ground pepper, which made D'Artagnan sneeze. The shop-boys, proud of being in company with so renowned a man of war, of a lieutenant of musketeers, who approached the person of the king, began to work with an enthusiasm which was something like delirium, and to serve the customers with a disdainful precipitation that was remarked by several.

Planchet put away his money, and made up his accounts, amidst civilities addressed to his old master. Planchet had with his equals the short speech and the haughty familiarity of the rich shopkeeper who serves everybody and waits for nobody. D'Artagnan observed this shade with a pleasure which we will analyse presently. He saw night come on by degrees, and at length Planchet conducted him to a chamber on the first story, where, amidst bales and chests, a table very nicely set out awaited the two guests.

D'Artagnan took advantage of a moment's pause to examine the countenance of Planchet, whom he had not seen for a year past. The shrewd Planchet had acquired a slight protuberance in front, but his countenance

was not puffed. His keen eye still played with facility in its deep-sunk orbit ; and fat, which levels all the characteristic saliences of the human face, had not yet touched either his high cheek-bones, the index of cunning and cupidity, or his pointed chin, the index of acuteness and perseverance. Planchet reigned with as much majesty in his dining-room as in his shop. He set before his master a frugal, but a perfectly Parisian repast : roast meat, cooked at the baker's, with vegetables, salad, and a dessert borrowed from the shop itself. D'Artagnan was pleased that the grocer had drawn from behind the fagots a bottle of that Anjou wine which, during all his life, had been D'Artagnan's wine by predilection.

"Formerly, monsieur," said Planchet, with a smile full of *bonhomie*, "it was I who drank your wine ; now you do me the honour to drink mine."

"And, thank God, friend Planchet, I shall drink it for a long time to come, I hope ; for at present I am free."

"Free ? You have leave of absence, monsieur ?"

"Unlimited."

"You are leaving the service ?" said Planchet, stupefied.

"Yes, I am resting."

"And the king ?" cried Planchet, who could not suppose it possible that the king could do without the services of such a man as D'Artagnan.

"The king will try his fortune elsewhere. But we have supped well, you are disposed to enjoy yourself ; you provoke me to repose confidence in you. Open your ears, then."

"They are open." And Planchet, with a laugh more frank than cunning, opened a bottle of white wine.

"Leave me my reason, though."

"Oh, as to you losing your head—you, monsieur !"

"Now my head is my own, and I mean to take better care of it than ever. In the first place, we will talk of finance. How fares your money-box ?"

"Wonderfully well, monsieur. The twenty thousand livres I had of you are still employed in my trade, in which they bring me nine per cent. I give you seven, so I gain two by you."

"And you are still satisfied ?"

"Delighted. Have you brought me any more ?"

"Better than that. But do you want any ?"

"Oh ! not at all. Every one is willing to trust me now. I am extending my business."

"That was your project."

"I play the banker a little. I buy goods of my necessitous brethren ; I lend money to those who are not ready for their payments."

"Without usury ?"

"Oh ! monsieur, in the course of the last week I have had two meetings on the boulevards, on account of the word you have just pronounced."

"What ?"

"You shall see : it concerned a loan. The borrower gives me in pledge some raw sugars, upon condition that I should sell if repayment were not made at a fixed period. I lend a thousand livres. He does not pay me, and I sell the sugars for thirteen hundred livres. He learns this and claims a hundred crowns. *Ma foi !* I refused, pretending that I could not sell them for more than nine hundred livres. He accused me of usury. I begged him to repeat that word to me behind the boulevards. He was an old guard, and he came ; and I passed your sword through his left thigh."

"*Tu dieu !* what a pretty sort of banker you make !" said D'Artagnan.

"For above thirteen per cent. I fight," replied Planchet : "that is my character."

"Take only twelve," said D'Artagnan, "and call the rest premium and brokerage."

"You are right, monsieur ; but to your business."

"Ah ! Planchet, it is very long and very hard to speak."

"Do speak it, nevertheless."

D'Artagnan twisted his moustache like a man embarrassed with the confidence he is about to repose, and mistrustful of his confidant.

"Is it an investment ?" asked Planchet.

"Why, yes."—"At good profit ?"

"A capital profit,—four hundred per cent., Planchet."

Planchet gave such a blow with his fist upon the table, that the bottles bounded as if they had been frightened.

"Good heavens ! is that possible ?"

"I think it will be more," replied D'Artagnan coolly ; "but I like to lay it at the lowest."

"The devil !" said Planchet, drawing nearer. "Why, monsieur, that is magnificent ! Can one place much money in it ?"

"Twenty thousand livres each, Planchet."

"Why, that is all you have, monsieur. For how long a time ?"

"For a month."

"And that will give us——"

"Fifty thousand livres each, profit."

"It is monstrous ! It is worth while to fight for such interest as that !"

"In fact, I believe it will be necessary to fight not a little," said D'Artagnan, with the same tranquillity ; "but this time there are two of us, Planchet, and I will take all the blows to myself."

"Oh ! monsieur, I will not allow that."

"Planchet, you cannot be concerned in it ; you would be obliged to leave your business and your family."

"The affair is not in Paris, then."—"No."

"Abroad ?"—"In England."

"A speculative country, that is true," said Planchet,—“a country I am well acquainted with. What sort of an affair, monsieur, without too much curiosity ?"

"Planchet, it is a restoration."

"Of monuments ?"

"Yes, of monuments ; we will restore Whitehall."

"That is important. And in a month, you think ?"

"I will undertake it."

"That concerns you, monsieur, and when once you are engaged——"

"Yes, that concerns me. I know what I am about ; nevertheless, I will freely consult with you."

"You do me great honour ; but I know very little about architecture."

"Planchet, you are wrong ; you are an excellent architect, quite as good as I am, for the case in question."

"Thanks, monsieur. But your old friends of the musketeers ?"

"I have been, I confess, tempted to name the thing to those gentlemen, but they are all absent from their houses. It is vexatious, for I know none more bold or more able."

"Ah ! then it appears there will be an opposition, and the enterprise will be disputed ?"

"Oh yes, Planchet, yes."

"I burn to know the details, monsieur."

"They are these, Planchet—close all the doors firmly."

"Yes, monsieur." And Planchet double-locked them."

"That is well ; now draw near." Planchet obeyed.

"And open the window, because the noise of the passers-by and the carts will deafen all who might hear us. Planchet opened the window as desired, and the puff of tumult which filled the chamber with cries, wheels, barking, and steps deafened D'Artagnan himself, as he had wished. He then swallowed a glass of white wine, and commenced in these terms : "Planchet, I have an idea."

"Ah ! monsieur, I recognise you so well in that !" replied Planchet, panting with emotion.

## CHAPTER XX.

OF THE SOCIETY WHICH WAS FORMED IN THE RUE DES LOMBARDS, AT THE SIGN OF THE "PILON D'OR," TO CARRY OUT THE IDEA OF M. D'ARTAGNAN.

AFTER an instant of silence, in which D'Artagnan appeared to be collecting, not one idea, but all his ideas—"It cannot be, my dear Planchet," said he, "that you have not heard speak of his majesty Charles I. of England?"

"Alas ! yes, monsieur, since you left France in order to carry him assistance, and that, in spite of that assistance, he fell, and was near dragging you down in his fall."

"Exactly so, I see you have a good memory, Planchet."

"Peste ! the astonishing thing would be, if I could have lost that memory, however bad it might have been. When one has heard Grimaud, who, you know, is not given to talking, relate how the head of King Charles fell, how you sailed the half of a night in a scuttled vessel, and saw rise up upon the water that M. Mordaunt with a certain gold-hafted poniard sticking in his breast, one is not very likely to forget such things."

"And yet there are people who forget them, Planchet."

"Yes, such as have not seen them, or have not heard Grimaud relate them."

"Well, it is all the better that you recollect all that ; I shall only have to remind you of one thing, and that is, that Charles I. had a son."

"Without contradicting you, monsieur, he had two," said Planchet ; "for I saw the second in Paris, M. le Duke of York, one day, as he was going to the Palais Royal, and I was told that he was not the eldest son of Charles I. As to the eldest, I have the honour of knowing him by name, but not personally."

"That is exactly the point, Planchet, we must come to : it is to this eldest son, formerly called the prince of Wales, and who is now styled Charles II., king of England."

"A king without a kingdom, monsieur," replied Planchet sententiously.

"Yes, Planchet, and you may add an unfortunate prince, more unfortunate than a man of the dregs of the people in the worst quarter of Paris."

Planchet made a gesture full of that sort of compassion which we grant to strangers with whom we think we can never possibly find ourselves in contact. Besides, he did not see in this politico-sentimental operation, any sign of the commercial idea of M. d'Artagnan, and it was in this idea that D'Artagnan, who was, by habit, pretty well acquainted with men and things, had principally interested Planchet.

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themselves Rumps and Barebones? The parliament does not trouble me at all, Planchet."

"As soon as it ceases to trouble you, monsieur, let us pass on."

"Yes, and arrive at the result. You remember Cromwell, Planchet?"

"I have heard a great deal of talk about him."

"He was a rough soldier."

"And a terrible eater, moreover."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, at one gulp, he swallowed all England."

"Well, Planchet, the evening before the day on which he swallowed England, if any one had swallowed M. Cromwell?"

"Oh! monsieur, that is one of the first axioms of mathematics, that the container must be greater than the contained."

"Very well! That is our affair, Planchet."

"But M. Cromwell is dead, and his container is now the tomb."

"My dear Planchet, I see with pleasure, that you have not only become a mathematician, but a philosopher."

"Monsieur, in my grocery business I use much printed paper, and that instructs me."

"Bravo! You know then, in that case—for you have not learnt mathematics and philosophy without a little history—that after this Cromwell so great, there came one who was very little."

"Yes; he was named Richard, and he has done as you have, M. d'Artagnan—he has given in his resignation."

"Very well said—very well! After the great man who is dead, after the little one who gave in his resignation, there is come a third. This one is named Monk; he is an able general, considering he has never fought a battle; he is a skilful diplomatist, considering that he never speaks in public, and that having to say 'good day' to a man, he meditates twelve hours, and ends by saying 'good night;' which makes people exclaim '*miracle!*' seeing that it falls out correctly."

"That is rather strong," said Planchet; "but I know another polite man who resembles him very much."

"M. Mazarin, don't you mean?"—"Himself."

"You are right, Planchet; only M. Mazarin does not aspire to the throne of France; and that changes everything. Do you see? Well, this M. Monk, who has England ready-roasted in his plate, and who is already opening his mouth to swallow it—this M. Monk, who says to the people of Charles II., and to Charles II himself, '*Nescio vos*'—"

"I don't understand English," said Planchet.

"Yes, but I understand it," said D'Artagnan. "'*Nescio vos*' means 'I do not know you.' This M. Monk, the most important man in England, when he shall have swallowed it——"

"Well?" asked Planchet.

"Well, my friend, I will go over yonder, and with my forty men I will carry him off, pack him up, and bring him into France, where two modes of proceeding present themselves to my dazzled eyes."

"Oh! and to mine too," cried Planchet, transported with enthusiasm.

"We will put him in a cage and show him for money."

"Well, Planchet, that is a third plan of which I had not thought."

"Do you think it a good one?"

"Yes, certainly; but I think mine better."

"Let us see yours, then."

"In the first place, I will set a ransom on him."

"Of how much?"

"*Peste!* a fellow like that must be well worth a hundred thousand crowns."

"Yes, yes!"

"You see, then—in the first place, a ransom of a hundred thousand crowns."

"Or else——"

"Or else, which is much better, I deliver him up to King Charles, who, having no longer either a general or an army to fear, nor a diplomatist to trick him, will restore himself, and when once restored will pay down to me the hundred thousand crowns in question. That is the idea I have formed; what do you say to it, Planchet?"

"Magnificent, monsieur!" cried Planchet, trembling with emotion. "How did you conceive that idea?"

"It came to me one morning on the banks of the Loire, whilst our beloved king, Louis XIV., was pretending to snivel upon the hand of Made-moiselle de Mancini."

"Monsieur, I declare the idea is sublime. But——"

"Ah! is there a *but*?"

"Permit me! But this is a little like the skin of that fine bear—you know—that they were about to sell, but which it was necessary to take from the back of the living bear. Now, to take M. Monk, there will be a bit of a scuffle, I should think."

"No doubt; but as I shall raise an army——"

"Yes, yes—I understand, *parbleu!*—a *coup-de-main*. Yes, then, monsieur, you will triumph, for no one equals you in such sort of encounters."

"I certainly am lucky in them," said D'Artagnan, with a proud simplicity. "You know that if for this affair I had my dear Athos, my brave Porthos, and my cunning Aramis, the business would be settled; but they are all lost, as it appears, and nobody knows where to find them. I will do it, then, alone. Now, do you find the business good, and the investment advantageous?"

"Too much so—too much so."

"How can that be?"

"Because fine things never reach the point expected."

"This is infallible, Planchet, and the proof is that I undertake it. It will be for you a tolerably pretty gain, and for me a very interesting stroke. It will be said, 'Such was the old age of M. D'Artagnan;' and I shall hold a place in stories, and even in history itself, Planchet. I am greedy of honour."

"Monsieur," cried Planchet, "when I think that it is here, in my home, in the midst of my sugar, my prunes, and my cinnamon, that this gigantic project is ripened, my shop seems a palace to me."

"Beware, beware, Planchet! If the least report of this escapes, there is the Bastille for both of us. Beware, my friend; for this is a plot we are hatching. M. Monk is the ally of M. Mazarin—beware!"

"Monsieur, when a man has had the honour to belong to you, he knows nothing of fear; and when he has the advantage of being bound up in interests with you, he holds his tongue."

"Very well; that is more your affair than mine, seeing that in a week I shall be in England."

"Begone, begone, monsieur—the sooner the better."

"Is the money then ready?"

"It will be to-morrow ; to-morrow you shall receive it from my own hands. Will you have gold or silver?"

"Gold ; that is most convenient. But how are we going to arrange this? Let us see."

"Oh, good Lord ! in the simplest way possible. You shall give me a receipt, that is all."

"No, no," said D'Artagnan, warmly ; "we must preserve order in all things."

"That is likewise my opinion ; but with you, M. d'Artagnan——"

"And if I should die yonder—if I am killed by a musket-ball—if I should burst with drinking beer?"

"Monsieur, I beg you to believe that in that case I should be so much afflicted at your death, that I should think nothing about the money."

"Thank you, Planchet ; but that will not do. We will, like two lawyers' clerks, draw up together an agreement, a sort of act, which may be called a deed of company."

"Willingly, monsieur."

"I know it is difficult to draw such a thing up, but we will try."

"Let us try, then." And Planchet went in search of pens, ink, and paper. D'Artagnan took the pen and wrote :—"Between Messire d'Artagnan, ex-lieutenant of the king's musketeers, at present residing in the Rue Tiquetonne, Hôtel de la Chevette ; and the Sieur Planchet, grocer, residing in the Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the 'Pilon d'Or,' it has been agreed as follows :—A company, with a capital of forty thousand livres, and formed for the purpose of carrying out an idea conceived by M. d'Artagnan. The Sieur Planchet, who is acquainted with this idea of M. d'Artagnan, and who approves of it in all points, will place twenty thousand livres in the hands of M. d'Artagnan. He will require neither repayment nor interest before the return of M. d'Artagnan from a voyage he is about to make into England. On his part, M. d'Artagnan undertakes to find twenty thousand livres, which he will join to the twenty thousand already laid down by the Sieur Planchet. He will employ the said sum of forty thousand livres as good to him shall seem, but still in an undertaking which is described below. On the day in which M. d'Artagnan shall have re-established, by whatever means, his majesty King Charles II. upon the throne of England, he will pay into the hands of M. Planchet the sum of——"

"The sum of a hundred and fifty thousand livres," said Planchet, innocently, perceiving that D'Artagnan hesitated.

"Oh, the devil, no !" said D'Artagnan, "the division cannot be made by half ; that would not be just."

"And yet, monsieur, we each lay down half," objected Planchet, timidly.

"Yes ; but listen to this clause, my dear Planchet, and if you do not find it equitable in every respect, when it is written, well, we can scratch it out again :—'Nevertheless, as M. d'Artagnan brings to the association, besides his capital of twenty thousand livres, his time, his idea, his industry, and his skin,—things which he appreciates strongly, particularly the last,—M. d'Artagnan will keep, of the three hundred thousand livres, two hundred thousand livres for himself, which will make his share two-thirds.'"

"Very well," said Planchet.

"Is it just?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Perfectly just, monsieur."

"And you will be contented with a hundred thousand livres?"

"*Peste!* I think so. A hundred thousand for twenty thousand!"

"And in a month, understand."

"How, in a month?"

"Yes, I only ask one month."

"Monsieur," said Planchet, generously, "I will give you six weeks."

"Thank you," replied the musketeer civilly; after which the two partners reperused their deed.

"That is perfect, monsieur," said Planchet; "and the late M. Coque-nard, the first husband of Madame la Baronne du Valon, could not have done it better."

"Do you find it so? Let us sign it, then." And both affixed their signatures.

"In this fashion," said D'Artagnan, "I shall have no obligations to any one."

"But I shall be under obligations to you," said Planchet.

"No; for whatever store I set by it, Planchet, I may lose my skin yonder, and you will lose all. *A propos—peste!*—that makes me think of the principal, an indispensable clause. I will write it:—'In the case of M. d'Artagnan succumbing in this enterprise, liquidation will be considered made, and the Sieur Planchet will give quittance from that moment to the shade of Messire d'Artagnan, for the twenty thousand livres paid by him into the *caisse* of the said company'."

This last clause made Planchet knit his brows a little; but when he saw the brilliant eye, the muscular hand, the back so supple and so strong, of his associate, he regained his courage, and, without regret, he at once added another stroke to his signature. D'Artagnan did the same. Thus was drawn the first act of a company known; perhaps such things have been abused a little since, both in form and principle.

"Now," said Planchet, pouring out the last glass of Anjou wine for D'Artagnan,—"now go to sleep, my dear master."

"No," replied D'Artagnan; "for the most difficult part now remains to be done, and I will think over that difficult part."

"Bah!" said Planchet; "I have such a great confidence in you, M. d'Artagnan, that I would not give my hundred thousand livres for ninety thousand livres down."

"And devil take me if I don't think you are right!" Upon which D'Artagnan took a candle and went up to his bedroom.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN PREPARES TO TRAVEL FOR THE HOUSE OF PLANCHET AND COMPANY.

D'ARTAGNAN reflected to such good purpose during the night, that his plan was settled by morning. "This is it," said he, sitting up in bed, supporting his elbow on his knee, and his chin in his hand;—"This is it. I will seek out forty steady, firm men, recruited among people a little compromised, but having habits of discipline. I will promise them five hundred livres for a month if they return; nothing if they do not return, or half for their kindred. As to food and lodging, that concerns the English, who have beasts in their pastures, bacon in their bacon-racks, fowls in their poultry-yards, and corn in their barns. I will present myself to General Monk with my little body of troops. He will receive me. I shall gain his confidence, and will abuse it as soon as possible."

But without going farther, D'Artagnan shook his head and interrupted himself. "No," said he; "I should not dare to relate this to Athos; the means is not then honourable. I must use violence," continued he,— "very certainly, I must, but without compromising my loyalty. With forty men I will traverse the country as a partisan. But if I fall in with, not forty thousand English, as Planchet said, but purely and simply with four hundred, I shall be beaten. Supposing that among my forty warriors there should be found at least ten stupid ones—ten who will allow themselves to be killed one after the other, from mere folly? No; it is, in fact, impossible to find forty men to be depended upon—that does not exist. I must learn how to be contented with thirty. With ten men less I should have the right of avoiding any armed rencontre, on account of the small number of my people; and if the rencontre should take place, my chance is much more certain with thirty men than forty. Besides, I should save five thousand francs; that is to say, the eighth of my capital: that is worth the trial. This being so, I should have thirty men. I will divide them into three bands,—we will spread ourselves about over the country, with an injunction to reunite at a given moment; in this fashion, ten by ten, we should excite no suspicion—we should pass unperceived. Yes, yes, thirty—that is a magic number. There are three tens—three, that divine number! And then, truly, a company of thirty men, when all together, will look rather imposing. Ah! stupid wretch that I am!" continued D'Artagnan, "I want thirty horses. That is ruinous. Where the devil was my head when I forgot the horses? We cannot, however, think of striking such a blow without horses. Well, so be it, that sacrifice must be made; we can get the horses in the country—they are not bad, besides. But I forgot—*peste!* Three bands—that necessitates three leaders: there is the difficulty. Of the three commanders I have already one—that is myself;—yes, but the two others will of themselves cost almost as much money as all the rest of the troop. No: decidedly I must have but one lieutenant. In that case, then, I should reduce my troop to twenty men. I know very well that twenty men is but very little; but since with thirty I was determined not to seek to come to blows, I should do so more carefully still with twenty. Twenty—that is a round number; that, besides, reduces the number of the horses by ten, which is a consideration; and then, with a good lieutenant—— *Mordieux!* what things patience and calculation are! Was I not going to embark with forty men, and I have now reduced them to twenty for an equal success? Ten thousand livres saved at one stroke, and more safety; that is well! Now, then, let us see; we have nothing to do but to find this lieutenant—let him be found, then; and after——? That is not so easy; he must be brave and good, a second myself. Yes; but a lieutenant must have my secret, and as that secret is worth a million, and I shall only pay my man a thousand livres, fifteen hundred at the most, my man will sell the secret to Monk. *Mordieux!* no lieutenant. Besides, this man, were he as mute as a disciple of Pythagoras,—this man would be sure to have in the troop some favourite soldier, whom he would make his sergeant; the sergeant would penetrate the secret of the lieutenant, in case the latter should be honest and unwilling to sell it. Then the sergeant, less honest and less ambitious, will give up the whole for fifty thousand livres. Come, come! that is impossible. Decidedly the lieutenant is impossible. But then I must have no fractions; I cannot divide my troop into two, and act upon two points at once, without another self, who—— But what is the use of acting upon two points, as we have

only one man to take? What can be the good to weaken a corps by placing the right here, and the left there? A single corps, *Mordieux!* a single one, and that commanded by D'Artagnan. Very well. But twenty men marching in one band are suspected by everybody; twenty horsemen must not be seen marching together, or a company will be detached against them, and the orderly word will be required; and which company, upon seeing the embarrassment of the troop in giving it, would shoot M. d'Artagnan and his men like so many rabbits. I reduce myself then to ten men; in this fashion I shall act simply and with unity; I shall be forced to be prudent, which is half success in an affair of the kind I am undertaking; a greater number might, perhaps, have drawn me into some folly. Ten horses are not many either to buy or take. A capital idea; what tranquillity it infuses into my mind! No more suspicions—no orderly words—no more dangers! Ten men,—they are valets or clerks. Ten men, leading ten horses laden with merchandise of whatever kind, are tolerated, well received everywhere. Ten men travel on account of the house of Planchet and Co., of France: nothing can be said against that. These ten men, clothed like manufacturers, have a good cutlass or a good mousqueton at their saddle-bow, and a good pistol in the holster. They never allow themselves to be uneasy, because they have no evil designs. They are perhaps, at bottom, a little disposed to be smugglers, but what harm is in that? Smuggling is not, like polygamy, a hanging offence. The worst that can happen to us is the confiscation of our merchandise. Our merchandise confiscated—a fine affair that! Come, come! it is a superb plan. Ten men only—ten men, whom I will engage for my service; ten men, who shall be as resolute as forty who would cost me four times as much, and to whom, for greater security, I will never open my mouth as to my designs, and to whom I shall only say, 'My friends, there is a blow to be struck.' Things being after this fashion, Satan will be very malicious if he plays me one of his tricks. Fifteen thousand livres saved—that's superb—out of twenty!"

Thus fortified by his laborious calculations, D'Artagnan stopped at this plan, and determined to change nothing in it. He had already on a list furnished by his inexhaustible memory, ten men illustrious amongst the seekers of adventures, ill treated by fortune, and not on good terms with justice. Upon this D'Artagnan rose, and instantly set off on the search, telling Planchet not to expect him at breakfast, and perhaps not at dinner. A day and a half spent in rummaging amongst certain cabins in Paris sufficed for his recruiting; and, without allowing his adventurers to communicate with each other, he had picked up and got together, in less than thirty hours, a charming collection of ill-looking faces, speaking a French less pure than the English they were about to attempt. These men were, for the most part, guards, whose merit D'Artagnan had had an opportunity of appreciating in various rencontres, and whom drunkenness, unlucky sword-thrusts, unexpected winnings at play, or the economical reforms of Mazarin, had forced to seek shade and solitude, those two great consolers of irritated and chafed spirits. They bore upon their countenances and in their vestments the traces of the heartaches they had undergone. Some had their visages scarred,—all had their clothes in rags. D'Artagnan comforted the most needy of these fraternal miseries by a prudent distribution of the crowns of the society; then having taken care that these crowns should be employed in the physical improvement of the troop, he appointed a rendezvous with them in the north of France, between Berghes and Saint-Omer. Six days were allowed as the utmost

term, and D'Artagnan was sufficiently acquainted with the good will, the good humour, and the relative probity of these illustrious recruits, to be certain that not one of them would fail in his appointment. These orders given, this rendezvous fixed, he went to bid farewell to Planchet, who asked news of his army. D'Artagnan did not think proper to inform him of the reduction he had made in his *personnel*. He feared he should make an abatement in the confidence of his associate by such an avowal. Planchet was delighted to learn that the army was levied, and that he (Planchet) found himself a kind of half-king, who, from his throne-counter, kept in pay a body of troops destined to make war against perfidious Albion, that enemy of all true French hearts. Planchet paid down, in double-louis, twenty thousand livres to D'Artagnan, on the part of himself (Planchet) and twenty other thousand livres, still in double-louis, on account of D'Artagnan. D'Artagnan placed each of the twenty thousand francs in a bag, and weighing a bag in each hand,—“This money is very embarrassing, my dear Planchet,” said he. “Do you know this weighs thirty pounds?”

“Bah! your horse will carry that like a feather.”

D'Artagnan shook his head. “Don't tell such things to me, Planchet: a horse overloaded with thirty pounds, in addition to the rider and his portmanteau, cannot cross a river so easily—cannot leap over a wall or a ditch so lightly; and the horse failing, the horseman fails. It is true that you, Planchet, who have served in the infantry, may not be aware of all that.”

“Then what is to be done, monsieur?” said Planchet, greatly embarrassed.

“Listen to me,” said D'Artagnan. “I will pay my army on its return home. Keep my half of twenty thousand livres, which you can make use of during that time.”

“And my half?” said Planchet,

“I will take that with me.”

“Your confidence does me honour,” said Planchet; “but suppose you should not return?”

“That is possible, though not very probable. Then, Planchet, in case I should not return—give me a pen; I will make my will.” D'Artagnan took a pen and some paper, and wrote upon a plain sheet,—“I, D'Artagnan, possess twenty thousand livres, laid up, sou by sou, during thirty years that I have been in the service of his majesty the king of France. I leave five thousand to Athos, five thousand to Porthos, and five thousand to Aramis, that they may give the said sums in my name and their own to my young friend Raoul, Vicomte de Bragelonne. I give the remaining five thousand to Planchet, that he may distribute the fifteen thousand with less regret among my friends. With which purpose I sign these presents.—D'ARTAGNAN.”

Planchet appeared very curious to know what D'Artagnan had written.

“Here,” said the musketeer, “read it.”

On reading the last lines the tears came into Planchet's eyes. “You think, then, that I would not have given the money without that? Then I will have none of your five thousand francs.”

D'Artagnan smiled. “Accept it, accept it, Planchet; and in that way you will only lose fifteen thousand francs instead of twenty thousand, and you will not be tempted to disregard the signature of your master and friend, by losing nothing at all.”

How well that dear Monsieur d'Artagnan was acquainted with the hearts of men and grocers! They who have pronounced Don Quixote mad

because he rode out to the conquest of an empire with nobody but Sancho his squire, and they who have pronounced Sancho mad because he accompanied his master in his attempt to conquer the said empire,—they certainly will have no hesitation in extending the same judgment to D'Artagnan and Planchet. And yet the first passed for one of the most subtle spirits among the astute spirits of the court of France. As to the second, he had acquired by good right the reputation of one of the longest heads among the grocers of the Rue des Lombards; consequently of Paris, consequently of France. Now, to consider these two men from the point of view in which you would consider other men, and the means by the aid of which they contemplated to restore a monarch to his throne, comparatively with other means, the shallowest brains of the country where brains are most shallow must have revolted against the presumptuous madness of the lieutenant and the stupidity of his associate. Fortunately D'Artagnan was not a man to listen to the idle talk of those around him, or to the comments that were made on himself. He had adopted the motto, "Act well, and let people talk." Planchet, on his part, had adopted this, "Act, and say nothing." It resulted from this, that, according to the custom of all superior geniuses, these two men flattered themselves, *intra pectus*, with being in the right against all who found fault with them.

As a commencement, D'Artagnan set out in the finest of possible weather, without a cloud in the heavens—without a cloud on his mind, joyous and strong, calm and decided, great in his resolution, and consequently carrying with him a tenfold dose of that potent fluid which the shocks of mind cause to spring from the nerves, and which procure for the human machine a force and an influence of which future ages will render, according to all probability, an account more arithmetically than we can possibly do at present. He was again, as in times past, in that same road of adventures which had led him to Boulogne, and which he was now travelling for the second time. It appeared to him that he could almost recognise the trace of his own steps upon the road, and that of his fist upon the doors of the hosteleries;—his memory, always active and present, brought back that youth which had not, thirty years before, belied either his great heart or his wrist of steel. What a rich nature was that of this man! He had all passions, all defects, all weaknesses, and the spirit of contradiction familiar to his understanding, changed all these imperfections into corresponding qualities. D'Artagnan, thanks to his ever active imagination, was afraid of a shadow, and ashamed of being afraid, he marched straight up to that shadow, and then became extravagant in his bravery, if the danger proved to be real. Thus everything in him was emotion, and therefore enjoyment. He loved the society of others, but never became tired of his own; and more than once, if he could have been heard when he was alone, he might have been seen laughing at the jokes he related to himself, or the tricks his imagination created just five minutes before *ennui* might have been looked for. D'Artagnan was not perhaps so gay this time as he had been with the perspective of finding some good friends at Calais, instead of that of joining the ten scamps there; melancholy, however, did not visit him above once a day, and it was about five visits that he received from that sombre deity before he got sight of the sea at Boulogne, and then these visits were indeed but short. But when once D'Artagnan found himself near the field of action, all other feeling but that of confidence disappeared never to return. From Boulogne he followed the coast to Calais. Calais was the place of general rendezvous, and at Calais he had named to each of his recruits the hostelry of "Le Grand Monarque,"

where living was not extravagant, where sailors messed, and where men of the sword, with sheath of leather, be it understood, found lodging, table, food, and all the comforts of life, for thirty sous per diem. D'Artagnan proposed to himself to take them by surprise *in flagrante delicto* of wandering life, and to judge by the first appearance if he could reckon upon them as trusty companions.

He arrived at Calais at half-past four in the afternoon.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### D'ARTAGNAN TRAVELS FOR THE HOUSE OF PLANCHET AND COMPANY.

THE hostelry of "Le Grand Monarque" was situate in a little street parallel to the port, without looking out upon the port itself. Some lanes cut—as steps cut the two parallels of the ladder—the two great straight lines of the port and the street. By these lanes, passengers debouched suddenly from the port into the street, from the street on to the port. D'Artagnan, arrived at the port, took one of these lanes, and came out in front of the hostelry of "Le Grand Monarque." The moment was well chosen, and might remind D'Artagnan of his start in life at the hostelry of the "Franc-Meurier" at Meung. Some sailors who had been playing at dice had knocked up a quarrel, and were threatening each other furiously. The host, hostess, and two lads were watching with anxiety the circle of these angry gamblers, from the midst of which war seemed ready to break forth, bristling with knives and hatchets. The play, nevertheless, was continued. A stone bench was occupied by two men, who appeared thence to watch the door; four tables, placed at the back of the common chamber, were occupied by eight other individuals. Neither the men at the door, nor those at the tables took any part in the play or the quarrel. D'Artagnan recognised his ten men in these cold, indifferent spectators. The quarrel went on increasing. Every passion has, like the sea, its tide which ascends and descends. Arrived at the climax of passion, one sailor overturned the table and the money which was upon it. The table fell, and the money rolled about. In an instant all belonging to the hostelry threw themselves upon the stakes, and many a piece of silver was picked up by people who stole away whilst the sailors were scuffling with each other.

The two men on the bench and the eight at the tables, although they seemed perfect strangers to each other, these ten men alone, we say, appeared to have agreed to remain impassible amidst the cries of fury and the chinking of money. Two only contented themselves with repulsing with their feet combatants who came under their table. Two others, rather than take part in this disturbance, buried their hands in their pockets; and another two jumped upon the table they occupied, as people do to avoid being submerged by overflowing water.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan to himself, not having lost one of the details we have related, "this is a very fair gathering—circumspect, calm, accustomed to disturbance, acquainted with blows! *Peste!* I have been lucky."

All at once his attention was called to a particular part of the room. The two men who had repulsed the strugglers with their feet, were assailed with abuse by the sailors, who had become reconciled. One of them half-drunk with passion, and quite drunk with beer, came, in a menacing manner, to demand of the shorter of these two sages, by what

right he had touched with his foot creatures of the good God, who were not dogs. And whilst putting this question, in order to make it more direct, he applied his great fist to the nose of D'Artagnan's recruit. This man became pale, without its being to be discerned whether his paleness arose from anger or from fear ; seeing which, the sailor concluded it was from fear, and raised his fist with the manifest intention of letting it fall upon the head of the stranger. But, without the threatened man having appeared to move, he dealt the sailor such a severe blow in the stomach as sent him rolling and howling to the other side of the room. At the same instant, rallied by the *esprit de corps*, all the comrades of the conquered man fell upon the conqueror. The latter, with the same coolness of which he had given proof, without committing the imprudence of touching his arms, took up a beer-pot with a pewter lid, and knocked down two or three of his assailants ; then, as he was about to yield to numbers, the seven other silent men at the tables, who had not stirred, perceived that their cause was at stake, and came to the rescue. At the same time, the two indifferent spectators at the door turned round with frowning brows, indicating their evident intention of taking the enemy in the rear, if the enemy did not cease their aggressions. The host, his helpers, and two watchmen who were passing, and who, from curiosity, had penetrated too far into the room, were confounded in the tumult and loaded with blows. The Parisians hit like Cyclops, with an *ensemble* and a tactic delightful to behold. At length, obliged to beat a retreat before numbers, they formed an intrenchment behind the great table, which they raised by main force ; whilst the two others, arming themselves each with a trestle, so that, using it like a great sledge-hammer, they knocked down at a blow eight sailors upon whose heads they had brought their monstrous catapult in play. The floor was already strewn with wounded, and the room filled with cries and dust, when D'Artagnan, satisfied with the test, advanced, sword in hand, and striking with the pommel every head that came in his way, he uttered a vigorous *holà !* which put an instantaneous end to the conflict. A great back-flood directly took place from the centre to the sides of the room, so that D'Artagnan found himself isolated and dominator.

"What is all this about?" then demanded he of the assembly, with the majestic tone of Neptune pronouncing the *Quos ego*.

At the very instant, at the first sound of his voice, to carry on the Virgilian metaphor, D'Artagnan's recruits, recognising each his sovereign lord, discontinued at the same time their anger, their plank-fighting, and trestle blows. On their side, the sailors, seeing that long naked sword, that martial air, and the agile arm which came to the rescue of their enemies, in the person of a man who seemed accustomed to command, on their part, the sailors picked up their wounded and their pitchers. The Parisians wiped their brows, and viewed their leader with respect. D'Artagnan was loaded with thanks by the host of "Le Grand Monarque." He received them like a man who knows that nothing is being offered that does not belong to him, and then said, till supper was ready he would go and walk upon the port. Immediately each of the recruits, who understood the summons, took his hat, brushed the dust off his clothes, and followed D'Artagnan. But D'Artagnan, whilst observing, examining everything, took care not to stop ; he directed his course towards the *dune*, and the ten men—surprised at finding themselves going in the track of each other, uneasy at seeing on their right, on their left, and behind them, companions upon whom they had not reckoned—followed him, casting furtive glances

at each other. It was not till he had arrived at the hollow part of the deepest *dune* that D'Artagnan, smiling at seeing their shyness, turned towards them, making a friendly sign with his hand.

"Eh ! come, come, messieurs," said he, "let us not devour each other ; you are made to live together, to understand each other in all respects, and not one to devour another."

Instantly all hesitation ceased ; the men breathed as if they had been taken out of a coffin, and examined each other complacently. After this examination they turned their eyes towards their leader, who had long been acquainted with the art of speaking to men of that class, and improvised the following little speech, pronounced with an energy truly Gascon :

"Messieurs, you all know who I am. I have engaged you from knowing you are brave, and from being willing to associate you with me in a glorious enterprise. Figure to yourselves that in labouring for me you labour for the king. I only warn you that if you allow anything of this supposition to appear, I shall be forced to crack your skulls immediately, in the manner most convenient to me. You are not ignorant, messieurs, that state secrets are like a mortal poison : as long as that poison is in its box and the box closed, it is not injurious ; out of the box, it kills. Now draw near, and you shall know as much of this secret as I am able to tell you." All drew close to him with an expression of curiosity. "Approach," continued D'Artagnan, "and let not the bird which passes over our heads, the rabbit which sports in the *dunes*, the fish which bounds from the waters, hear us. Our business is to learn and to report to monsieur le surintendant of the finances to what extent English smuggling is injurious to the French merchants. I will enter every place, and will see everything. We are poor Picard fishermen, thrown upon the coast by a storm. It is certain that we must sell fish, neither more nor less, like true fishermen. Only people might guess who we are, and might molest us ; it is therefore necessary that we should be in a condition to defend ourselves. And this is why I have selected men of spirit and courage. We will lead a steady life, and we shall not incur much danger, seeing that we have behind us a powerful protector, thanks to whom, no embarrassment is possible. One thing alone puzzles me ; but I hope, after a short explanation, you will relieve me from that difficulty. The thing which puzzles me is taking with me a crew of stupid fishermen, which crew will annoy me immensely, whilst if, by chance, there were among you any who have seen the sea——"

"Oh ! let not that trouble you," said one of the recruits ; "I was a prisoner among the pirates of Tunis three years, and can manœuvre a boat like an admiral."

"See," said D'Artagnan, "what an admirable thing chance is !" D'Artagnan pronounced these words with an indefinable tene of feigned *bonhomie*, for D'Artagnan knew very well that the victim of pirates was an old corsair, and he had engaged him in consequence of that knowledge. But D'Artagnan never said more than there was occasion for saying, in order to leave people in doubt. He paid himself with the explanation, and welcomed the effect, without appearing to be preoccupied with the cause.

"And I," said a second, "I, by chance, had an uncle who directed the works of the port of La Rochelle. When quite a child, I played about the boats, and I know how to handle an oar or a sail as well as the best Ponantais sailor."—The last did not lie much more than the first, for he had rowed on board his majesty's galleys six years, at Ciotat. Two others

were more frank : they confessed honestly that they had served on board a vessel as soldiers on punishment, and did not blush at it. D'Artagnan found himself, then, the leader of ten men of war and four sailors, having at once a land army and a sea force, which would have carried the pride of Planchet to its height, if Planchet had known the details.

Nothing was now left but the general orders, and D'Artagnan gave them with precision. He enjoined his men to be ready to set out for the Hague, some following the coast which leads to Breskens, others the road to Antwerp. The rendezvous was given, by calculating each day's march, at fifteen days from that time, upon the chief place at the Hague. D'Artagnan recommended his men to go in couples, as they liked best, from sympathy. He himself selected from among those with the least hanging look, two guards whom he had formerly known, and whose only faults were being drunkards and gamblers. These men had not entirely lost all ideas of civilization, and under proper habiliments their hearts would have renewed their beatings. D'Artagnan, not to create any jealousy to the others, made the rest go forward. He kept his two selected ones, clothed them from his own kit, and set out with them. It was to these two, whom he seemed to honour with an absolute confidence, that D'Artagnan imparted a false confidence, destined to secure the success of his expedition. He confessed to them that the object was not to learn to what extent the French merchants were injured by English smuggling, but to learn how far French smuggling could annoy English trade. These men appeared convinced ; they were effectively so. D'Artagnan was quite sure that at the first debauch, when thoroughly drunk, one of the two would divulge the secret to the whole band. His play appeared infallible.

A fortnight after all we have said had taken place at Calais, the whole troop assembled at the Hague. Then D'Artagnan perceived that all his men, with remarkable intelligence, had already travestied themselves into sailors, more or less ill-treated by the sea. D'Artagnan left them to sleep in a cabin in Newkerke Street, whilst he lodged comfortably upon the Grand Canal. He learned that the king of England had come back to his old ally William II. of Nassau, stadtholder of Holland. He learned also that the refusal of Louis XIV. had a little cooled the protection afforded him up to that time, and in consequence he had gone to reside in a little village house at Scheveningen, situated in the *dunes*, on the seashore, about a league from the Hague. There, it was said, the unfortunate banished king consoled himself in his exile, by looking, with the melancholy peculiar to the princes of his race, at that immense North Sea, which separated him from his England, as it had formerly separated Mary Stuart from France. There, behind the trees of the beautiful wood of Scheveningen, on the fine sand upon which grows the golden broom of the *dune*, Charles II. vegetated as it did, more unfortunate than it, for he had life and thought, and he hoped and despaired by turns.

D'Artagnan went once as far as Scheveningen, in order to be certain that all was true that was said of the king. He beheld Charles II., pensive and alone, coming out of a little door opening into the wood, and walking on the beach in the setting sun, without even attracting the attention of the fishermen who, on their return in the evening, drew, like the ancient mariners of the Archipelago, their barks up upon the sand of the shore. D'Artagnan recognised the king ; he saw him fix his melancholy look upon the immense extent of the waters, and absorb upon his pale countenance the red rays of the sun already sloped by the black line of the horizon. Then Charles returned to his isolated abode, still alone, still slow and sad,

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GENERAL MONK.

amusing himself with making the friable and moving sand creak beneath his feet. That very evening D'Artagnan hired for a thousand livres a fishing-boat worth four thousand. He paid the thousand livres down, and deposited the three thousand with a Burgomaster, after which he embarked without their being seen, and in a dark night, the ten men who formed his land army ; and with the rising tide, at three o'clock in the morning, he got into the open sea, manœuvring ostensibly with the four others, and depending upon the science of his galley slave as upon that of the first pilot of the port.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR, VERY UNWILLINGLY, IS FORCED TO DO A LITTLE HISTORY.

WHILST kings and men were thus occupied with England, which governed itself quite alone, and which, it must be said to its praise, had never been so badly governed, a man upon whom God had fixed his eye, and placed his finger, a man predestined to write his name in brilliant letters in the book of history, was pursuing in the face of the world a work full of mystery and audacity. He went on, and no one knew whither he meant to go, although not only England, but France, but Europe, watched him marching with a firm step and lofty head. All that was known of this man we are about to tell. Monk had just declared for the liberty of the Rump parliament, a parliament which General Lambert, imitating Cromwell, whose lieutenant he had been, had just blocked up so closely, in order to bring it to his will, that no member, during all the blockade, was able to go out, and only one, Peter Wentworth, had been able to get in. Lambert and Monk—everything was resumed under these two men ; the first representing military despotism, the second representing pure republicanism. These men were the two sole political representatives of that revolution in which Charles I. had at first lost his crown, and afterwards his head. As regarded Lambert, he did not dissemble his views ; he sought to establish a military government, and to be himself the head of that government.

Monk, a rigid republican, some said, wished to maintain the Rump parliament, that visible representation, although degenerated, of the republic. Monk, artful and ambitious, said others, wished simply to make of this parliament, which he affected to protect, a solid step by which to mount the throne which Cromwell had made empty, but upon which he had never dared to take his seat. Thus Lambert by persecuting the parliament, and Monk by declaring for it, had mutually proclaimed themselves enemies of each other. Monk and Lambert, therefore, had at first thought of creating an army each for himself : Monk in Scotland, where were the Presbyterians and the royalists, that is to say, the malcontents ; Lambert in London, where was found, as is always the case, the strongest opposition against the power which it had beneath its eyes. Monk had pacified Scotland, he had there formed for himself an army, and found an asylum. The one watched the other. Monk knew that the day was not yet come, the day marked by the Lord for a great change ; his sword, therefore, appeared glued to the sheath. Inexpugnable in his wild and mountainous Scotland, an absolute general, king of an army of eleven thousand old soldiers, whom he had more than once led on to victory ; as well informed, nay, even better, of the affairs of London, than Lambert, who held garrison in the city,—such was the position of Monk, when, at a hundred

leagues from London, he declared himself for the parliament. Lambert, on the contrary, as we have said, lived in the capital. That was the centre of all his operations, and he there collected around him all his friends, and all the lower class of the people, eternally inclined to cherish the enemies of constituted power. It was then in London that Lambert learnt the support that, from the frontiers of Scotland, Monk lent to the parliament. He judged there was no time to be lost, and that the Tweed was not so far distant from the Thames that an army could not march from one river to the other, particularly when it was well commanded. He knew, besides, that as fast as the soldiers of Monk penetrated into England, they would form on their route that ball of snow, the emblem of the globe of fortune, which is for the ambitious nothing but a step growing unceasingly higher to conduct him to his object. He got together, then, his army, formidable at the same time for its composition and its numbers, and hastened to meet Monk, who, on his part, like a prudent navigator sailing amidst rocks, advanced by very short marches, his nose to the wind, listening to the reports and scenting the air which came from London.

The two armies came in sight of each other near Newcastle ; Lambert, arriving first, encamped in the city itself. Monk, always circumspect, stopped where he was, and placed his general quarters at Coldstream, on the Tweed. The sight of Lambert spread joy through the army of Monk, whilst, on the contrary, the sight of Monk threw disorder into the army of Lambert. It might have been believed that these intrepid warriors, who had made such a noise in the streets of London, had set out with the hopes of meeting no one, and that now, seeing that they had met an army, and that that army hoisted before them not only a standard, but still further, a cause and a principle,—it might have been believed, we say, that these intrepid warriors had begun to reflect that they were less good republicans than the soldiers of Monk, since the latter supported the parliament ; whilst Lambert supported nothing, not even himself. As to Monk, if he had had to reflect, or if he did reflect, it must have been after a sad fashion, for history relates—and that modest dame, it is well known, never lies,—for history relates, that the day of his arrival at Coldstream search was made in vain throughout the place for a single sheep.

If Monk had commanded an English army, that was enough to have brought about a general desertion. But it is not with the Scotch as it is with the English, to whom that fluid flesh which is called blood is a paramount necessity ; the Scotch, a poor and sober race, live upon a little barley crushed between two stones, diluted with the water of the fountain, and cooked upon another stone, heated. The Scotch, their distribution of barley being made, cared very little whether there was or was not any meat in Coldstream. Monk, little accustomed to barley-cakes, was hungry, and his staff, at least as hungry as himself, looked with anxiety to the right and left, to know what was being got ready for supper. Monk ordered search to be made ; his scouts had on arriving in the place found it deserted and the cupboards empty ; upon butchers and bakers it was of no use depending in Coldstream. The smallest morsel of bread, then, could not be found for the general's table.

As accounts succeeded each other, all equally unsatisfactory, Monk, seeing terror and discouragement upon every face, declared that he was not hungry ; besides, they should eat on the morrow, since Lambert was there probably with the intention of giving battle, and consequently to give up his provisions, if he were forced in Newcastle, or to deliver the soldiers of Monk from hunger for ever if he were conquered. This consolation

was not efficacious but upon a very small number ; but of what importance was it to Monk, for Monk was very absolute, under the appearance of the most perfect mildness ? Every one, therefore, was obliged to be satisfied, or at least to appear so. Monk, quite as hungry as his people, but affecting perfect indifference for the absent mutton, cut a fragment of tobacco, half an inch long, from the *carotte* of a sergeant who formed part of his suite, and began to masticate the said fragment, assuring his lieutenants that hunger was a chimera, and that, besides, people were never hungry when they had anything to chew. This pleasantry satisfied some of those who had resisted Monk's first deduction from the neighbourhood of Lambert's army ; the number of the dissentients diminished then greatly ; the guard took their posts, the patrols began, and the general continued his frugal repast beneath his open tent.

Between his camp and that of the enemy stood an old abbey, of which, at the present day, there only remain some ruins, but which then was in existence, and was called Newcastle Abbey. It was built upon a vast site, independent at once of the plain and of the river, because it was almost a marsh fed by springs and kept up by rains. Nevertheless, in the midst of these strips of water, covered with long grass, rushes, and reeds, were seen elevated solid spots of ground, consecrated formerly to the kitchen-garden, the park, the pleasure-gardens, and other dependencies of the abbey, like one of those great sea-spiders, whose body is round, whilst the claws go diverging round from this circumference. The kitchen-garden, one of the longest claws of the abbey, extended to the camp of Monk. Unfortunately it was, as we have said, early in June, and the kitchen-garden, being abandoned, offered no resources. Monk had ordered this spot to be guarded, as most subject to surprises. The fires of the enemy's general were plainly to be perceived on the other side of the abbey. But between these fires and the abbey extended the Tweed, unfolding its luminous scales beneath the thick shade of tall green oaks. Monk was perfectly well acquainted with this position, Newcastle and its environs having already more than once been his head-quarters. He knew that by day his enemy might without doubt throw a few *éclaireurs* into these ruins and promote a skirmish, but that by night he would take care to abstain from such a risk. He felt himself, therefore, in security. Thus his soldiers saw him, after what he boastingly called his supper—that is to say, after the exercise of mastication reported by us at the commencement of this chapter—like Napoleon on the eve of Austerlitz, sleeping seated in his rush chair, half beneath the light of his lamp, half beneath the reflection of the moon, commencing its ascent into the heavens, which denoted that it was nearly half-past nine in the evening. All at once Monk was roused from his half-sleep, factitious perhaps, by a troop of soldiers, who came with joyous cries, and kicked the poles of his tent with a humming noise as if on purpose to wake him. There was no need of so much noise ; the general opened his eyes quickly.

"Well, my children, what is going on now ?" asked the general.

"General !" replied several voices at once, "General ! you shall have some supper."

"I have had my supper, gentlemen," replied he quietly, "and was comfortably digesting it, as you see. But come in, and tell me what brings you hither."

"Good news, general."

"Bah ! Has Lambert sent us word that he will fight to-morrow ?"

"No ; but we have just captured a fishing-boat conveying fish to Newcastle."

"And you have done very wrong, my friends. These gentlemen from London are delicate, they smack of their first service ; you will put them sadly out of humour this evening, and to-morrow they will be pitiless. It would really be in good taste to send back to Lambert both his fish and his fishermen, unless——" and the general reflected an instant.

"Tell me," continued he, "what are these fishermen, if you please?"

"Some Picard seamen who were fishing on the coasts of France or Holland, and who have been thrown upon ours by a gale of wind."

"Do any among them speak our language?"

"The leader spoke some few words of English."

The mistrust of the general was awakened in proportion as fresh information reached him. "That is well," said he, "I wish to see these men ; bring them to me."

An officer immediately went to fetch them.

"How many are there of them?" continued Monk ; "and what is their vessel?"

"There are ten or twelve of them, general, and they were aboard of a kind of *chasse-marée*, as it is called—Dutch-built, apparently."

"And you say they were carrying fish to Lambert's camp?"

"Yes, general, and they seem to have had good luck in their fishing."

"Humph ! We shall see that," said Monk.

At this moment the officer returned, bringing the leader of the fishermen with him. He was a man from fifty to fifty-five years old, but good-looking for his age. He was of middle height, and wore a *justau-corps* of coarse wool, a cap pulled down over his eyes, a cutlass hung from his belt, and he walked with the hesitation peculiar to sailors, who, never knowing, thanks to the movement of the vessel, whether their foot will be placed upon the plank or upon nothing, give to every one of their steps a fall as firm as if they were driving a pile. Monk, with an acute and penetrating look, examined the fisherman for some time, while the latter smiled, with that smile, half cunning, half silly, peculiar to French peasants.

"Do you speak English?" asked Monk, in excellent French.

"Ah ! but badly, my lord," replied the fisherman.

This reply was made much more with the lively and sharp accentuation of the people beyond the Loire, than with the slightly drawling accent of the countries on the west and north of France.

"But you do speak it?" persisted Monk, in order to examine this accent once more.

"Eh ! we men of the sea," replied the fisherman, "speak a little of all languages."

"Then you are a sea-fisherman?"

"I am at present, my lord—a fisherman, and a famous fisherman too. I have taken a barbel that weighs at least thirty pounds, and more than fifty mullets ; I have also some little whittings that will fry beautifully."

"You appear to me to have fished more frequently in the Gulf of Gascony than in the Channel," said Monk, smiling.

"Well, I am from the south ; but does that prevent me from being a good fisherman, my lord?"

"Oh ! not at all ; I will buy your fish. And now speak frankly : for whom did you destine them?"

"My lord, I will conceal nothing from you. I was going to Newcastle, following the coast, when a party of horsemen who were passing along in an opposite direction made a sign to my barque to turn back to your honour's camp, under penalty of a discharge of musketry. As I was not

armed for fighting," added the fisherman, smiling, "I was forced to submit."

"And why did you go to Lambert's camp in preference to mine?"

"My lord, I will be frank; will your lordship permit me?"

"Yes, and even, if there be occasion, shall command you to be so."

"Well, my lord, I was going to M. Lambert's camp because those gentlemen from the city pay well—whilst your Scotchmen, Puritans, Presbyterians, Covenanters, or whatever you choose to call them, eat but little, and pay for nothing."

Monk shrugged his shoulders, without, however, being able to refrain from smiling at the same time. "How is it that, being from the south, you come to fish on our coasts?"

"Because I have been fool enough to marry in Picardy."

"Yes; but even Picardy is not England."

"My lord, man shoves his boat into the sea, but God and the wind do the rest, and drive the boat where they please."

"You had, then, no intention of landing on our coasts?"

"Never."

"And what route were you steering?"

"We were returning from Ostend, where some mackerel have been seen already, when a sharp wind from the south drove us from our course; then, seeing that it was useless to struggle against it, we let it drive us. It then became necessary, not to lose our fish, which were good, to go and sell them at the nearest English port, and that was Newcastle. We were told the opportunity was good, as there was an increase of population in the camp, an increase of population in the city; both we were told were full of gentlemen, very rich and very hungry. So we steered our course towards Newcastle."

"And your companions, where are they?"

"Oh! my companions have remained on board; they are sailors without the least instruction."

"Whilst you——?" said Monk.

"Who, I?" said the *patron*, laughing; "I have sailed about with my father; and I know what is called a sou, a crown, a pistole, a louis, and a double-louis, in all the languages of Europe: my crew therefore listen to me as they would to an oracle, and obey me as if I were an admiral."

"Then it was you who preferred M. Lambert as the best customer?"

"Yes, certainly. And, to be frank, my lord, was I wrong?"

"You will see that by-and-by."

"At all events, my lord, if there is a fault, the fault is mine; and my comrades should not be dealt hardly with on that account."

"This is decidedly an intelligent, sharp fellow," thought Monk. Then, after a few minutes' silence employed in scrutinising the fisherman,—“You come from Ostend, did you not say?” asked the general.

"Yes, my lord, straight as a line."

"You have then heard speak of the affairs of the day; for I have no doubt that both in France and Holland they excite interest. What is he doing who calls himself king of England?"

"Oh, my lord!" cried the fisherman, with loud and expansive frankness, "that is a lucky question, and you could not put it to anybody better than to me, for in truth I can make you a famous reply. Imagine, my lord, that when putting into Ostend, to sell the few mackerel we had caught, I saw the ex-king walking on the *dunes*, waiting for his horses which were to take him to the Hague. He is a rather tall, pale man, with black hair,

and somewhat hard-featured. He looks ill, and I don't think the air of Holland agrees with him."

Monk followed with the greatest attention the rapid, heightened, and diffuse conversation of the fisherman, in a language which was not his own, but which, as we have said, he spoke with great facility. The fisherman, on his part, employed sometimes a French word, sometimes an English word, and sometimes a word which appeared not to belong to any language, but was, in truth, pure Gascon. Fortunately his eyes spoke for him, and that so eloquently, that it was possible to lose a word from his mouth, but not a single intention from his eyes. The general appeared more and more satisfied with his examination. "You must have heard that this ex-king, as you call him, was going to the Hague for some purpose?"

"Oh, yes," said the fisherman, "I heard that."

"And what was his purpose?"

"Always the same," said the fisherman. "Must he not always entertain the fixed idea of returning to England?"

"That is true," said Monk, pensively.

"Without reckoning," added the fisherman, "that the stadtholder—you know, my lord, William II.?—"

"Well?"

"He will assist him with all his power."

"Ah! did you hear that said?"

"No, but I think so."

"You are quite a politician, apparently," said Monk.

"Why, we sailors, my lord, who are accustomed to study the water and the air—that is to say, the two most mobile things in the world—are seldom deceived as to the rest."

"Now then," said Monk, changing the conversation, "I am told you are going to provision us."

"I will do my best, my lord."

"How much do you ask for your fish, in the first place?"

"Not such a fool as to name a price, my lord."

"Why not?"—"Because my fish is yours."

"By what right?"

"By that of the strongest."

"But my intention is to pay you for it."

"That is very generous of you, my lord."

"Is it worth—"

"My lord, I fix no price."

"What do you ask, then?"

"I only ask to be permitted to go away."

"Where?—to General Lambert's camp?"

"I!" cried the fisherman; "what should I go to Newcastle for, now I have no longer any fish?"

"At all events, listen to me."

"I do, my lord."

"I will give you counsel."

"How, my lord?—pay me and give me good counsel likewise? You overwhelm me, my lord."

Monk looked more earnestly than ever at the fisherman, of whom he still appeared to entertain some suspicion. "Yes, I will pay you, and give you a piece of advice; for the two things are connected. If you return, then, to General Lambert——"

The fisherman made a movement of his head and shoulders, which signified, "If he persist in it, I won't contradict him."

"Do not cross the marsh," continued Monk; "you will have money in your pocket, and there are in the marsh some Scotch ambuscaders I have placed there. Those people are very intractable; they understand but very little of the language which you speak, although it appears to me to be composed of three languages. They might take from you what I had given you, and, on your return to your country, you would not fail to say that General Monk has two hands, the one Scotch, and the other English; and that he takes back with the Scotch hand what he has given with the English hand."

"Oh! general, I will go where you like, be sure of that," said the fisherman, with a fear too expressive not to be exaggerated. "I only wish to remain here, if you will allow me to remain."

"I readily believe you," said Monk, with an imperceptible smile, "but I cannot, nevertheless, keep you in my tent."

"I have no such wish, my lord, and desire only that your lordship should point out where you will have me posted. Do not trouble yourself about us—with us a night soon passes away."

"You shall be conducted to your barque."

"As your lordship pleases. Only, if your lordship would allow me to be taken back by a carpenter, I should be extremely grateful."

"Why so?"

"Because the gentlemen of your army, in dragging my boat up the river with a cable pulled by their horses, have battered it a little upon the rocks of the shore, so that I have at least two feet of water in my hold, my lord."

"The greater reason why you should watch your boat, I think."

"My lord, I am quite at your orders," said the fisherman. "I will empty my baskets where you wish; then you will pay me, if you please to do so; and you will send me away, if it appears right to you. You see I am very easily managed and pleased, my lord."

"Come, come, you are a very good sort of a fellow," said Monk, whose scrutinising glance had not been able to find a single shade in the limpid eye of the fisherman. "Holloa, Digby!" An aide-de-camp appeared. "You will conduct this good fellow and his companions to the little tents of the canteens, in front of the marshes, so that they will be near their barque, and yet not sleep on board to-night.—What is the matter, Spithead?"

Spithead was the sergeant from whom Monk had borrowed a piece of tobacco for his supper. Spithead having entered the general's tent without being sent for, had drawn this question from Monk.

"My lord," said he, "a French gentleman has just presented himself at the outposts, and asks to speak to your honour."

All this was said, be it understood, in English; but, notwithstanding, it produced a slight emotion on the fisherman, which Monk, occupied with his sergeant, did not remark.

"Who is the gentleman?" asked Monk.

"My lord," replied Spithead, "he told it me; but those devils of French names are so difficult to be pronounced by a Scotch throat, that I could not retain it. I believe, however, from what the guards say, that it is the same gentleman who presented himself yesterday at the halt, and whom your honour would not receive."

"That is true; I was holding a council of officers."

"Will your honour give any orders respecting this gentleman?"

"Yes, let him be brought here."

"Must we take any precautions?"

"Such as what?"

"Binding his eyes, for instance."

"To what purpose? He can only see what I desire should be seen; that is to say, that I have around me eleven thousand brave men, who ask no better than to have their throats cut in honour of the parliament of Scotland and England."

"And this man, my lord?" said Spithead, pointing to the fisherman, who, during this conversation, had remained standing and motionless, like a man who sees but does not understand.

"Ah! that is true," said Monk. Then turning towards the fisherman,—"I shall see you again, my brave fellow," said he; "I have chosen you a lodging. Digby, take him to it. Fear nothing: your money shall be sent to you presently."

"Thank you, my lord," said the fisherman, and, after having bowed, he left the tent, accompanied by Digby. Before he had gone a hundred paces he found his companions, who were whispering with a volubility which did not seem exempt from inquietude; but he made them a sign which seemed to reassure them. "*Hold*, you fellows!" said the *patron*, "come this way. His lordship, General Monk, has the generosity to pay us for our fish, and the goodness to give us hospitality for to-night."

The fishermen gathered round their leader, and, conducted by Digby, the little troop proceeded towards the canteens, the post, as may be remembered, which had been assigned them. As they went along in the dark, the fishermen passed close to the guards who were conducting the French gentleman to General Monk. This gentleman was on horseback and enveloped in a large cloak, which prevented the *patron* from seeing him, however great his curiosity might be. As to the gentleman, ignorant that he was elbowing compatriots, he did not pay any attention to the little troop.

The aide-de-camp installed his guests in a tolerably comfortable tent, from which was dislodged an Irish canteen-woman, who went, with her six children, to sleep where she could. A large fire was burning in front of this tent, and threw its purple light over the grassy pools of the marsh, rippled by a fresh breeze. The installation made, the aide-de-camp wished the fishermen good-night, calling to their notice that they might see from the door of the tent the masts of their barque, which was tossing gently on the Tweed, a proof that it had not yet sunk. The sight of this appeared to delight the leader of the fishermen infinitely.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE TREASURE.

THE French gentleman whom Spithead had announced to Monk, and who had passed, so closely wrapped in his cloak, by the fishermen who left the general's tent five minutes before he entered it,—the French gentleman passed through the various posts without even casting his eyes around him, for fear of appearing indiscreet. As the order had been given, he was conducted to the tent of the general. The gentleman was left alone in the sort of antechamber in front of the principal body of the tent, where he awaited Monk, who only delayed till he had heard the report of his people, and observed through the opening in the canvas the countenance of the person who solicited an audience. Without doubt the report of those who

had accompanied the French gentleman established the discretion with which he was conducted ; for the first impression the stranger received of the welcome made him by the general was more favourable than he could have expected at such a moment, and on the part of so suspicious a man. Nevertheless, according to his custom, when Monk found himself in the presence of a stranger, he fixed upon him his penetrating eyes, which scrutiny, the stranger, on his part, sustained without embarrassment or notice. At the end of a few seconds, the general made a gesture with his hand and head in sign of attention.

"My lord," said the gentleman, in excellent English, "I have requested an interview with your honour, for an affair of importance."

"Monsieur," replied Monk, in French, "you speak our language well for a son of the continent. I ask your pardon—for doubtless the question is indiscreet—do you speak French with the same purity?"

"There is nothing surprising, my lord, in my speaking English tolerably ; I resided for some time in England in my youth, and since then I have made two voyages to this country." These words were spoken in French, and with a purity of accent that bespoke not only a Frenchman, but a Frenchman from the environs of Tours.

"And what part of England have you resided in, monsieur?"

"In my youth, London, my lord ; then, about 1635, I made a pleasure trip to Scotland ; and lastly, in 1648, I lived for some time at Newcastle, particularly in the convent, the gardens of which are now occupied by your army."

"Excuse me, monsieur ; but you must comprehend that these questions are necessary on my part—do you not?"

"It would astonish me, my lord, if they were not made."

"Now, then, monsieur, what can I do to serve you ? What do you wish?"

"This, my lord ;—but in the first place, are we alone?"

"Perfectly so, monsieur, except, of course, the post which guards us." So saying, Monk pulled open the canvas with his hand, and pointed to the soldier placed at ten paces at most from the tent, and who, at the first call, could have rendered assistance in a second.

"In that case, my lord," said the gentleman, in as calm a tone as if he had been for a length of time in habits of intimacy with his interlocutor, "I have made up my mind to address myself to you, because I believe you to be an honest man. Indeed, the communication I am about to make to you will prove to you the esteem in which I hold you."

Monk, astonished at this language, which established between him and the French gentleman equality at least, raised his piercing eye to the stranger's face, and with a sensible irony conveyed by the inflexion of his voice alone, for not a muscle of his face moved,—*"I thank you, monsieur,"* said he ; *"but, in the first place, whom have I the honour of speaking to?"*

*"I sent you my name by your serjeant, my lord."*

*"Excuse him, monsieur, he is a Scotchman,—he could not retain it."*

*"I am called the Comte de la Fère, monsieur,"* said Athos, bowing.

*"The Comte de la Fère?"* said Monk, endeavouring to recollect the name. *"Pardon me, monsieur, but this appears to be the first time I have ever heard that name. Do you fill any post at the court of France?"*

*"None ; I am a simple gentleman."*

*"What dignity?"*

*"King Charles I. made me a knight of the Garter, and Queen Anne of Austria has given me the cordon of the Holy Ghost. These are my only dignities."*

"The Garter ! the Holy Ghost ! Are you a knight of those two orders, monsieur ?"—"Yes."

"And on what occasions have such favours been bestowed upon you ?"

"For services rendered to their majesties."

Monk looked with astonishment at this man, who appeared to him so simple and so great at the same time. Then, as if he had renounced endeavouring to penetrate this mystery of a simplicity and grandeur upon which the stranger did not seem disposed to give him any other information than that which he had already received,—*"Did you present yourself yesterday at our advanced posts ?"*

"And was sent back ? Yes, my lord."

"Many officers, monsieur, would not permit anybody to enter their camp, particularly on the eve of a probable battle. But I differ from my colleagues, and like to leave nothing behind me. Every advice is good to me : all danger is sent to me by God, and I weigh it in my hand with the energy He has given me. So, yesterday, you were only sent back on account of the council I was holding. To-day I am at liberty,—speak."

"My lord, you have done so much the better in receiving me, from that which I have to say having nothing to do with the battle you are about to fight with General Lambert, or with your camp ; and the proof is, that I turned away my head that I might not see your men, and closed my eyes that I might not count your tents. No, I come to speak to you, my lord, on my own account."

"Speak, then, monsieur," said Monk.

"Just now," continued Athos, "I had the honour of telling your lordship that I for a long time lived in Newcastle : it was in the time of Charles I., and when the king was given up to Cromwell by the Scots."

"I know," said Monk, coldly.

"I had at that time a large sum in gold, and on the eve of the battle, from a presentiment perhaps of the turn which things would take on the morrow, I concealed it in the principal vault of the convent of Newcastle, in the tower of which you may see from hence the summit silvered by the moon. My treasure has then remained interred there, and I am come to entreat your honour to permit me to withdraw it before, perhaps, the battle turning that way, a mine or some other war engine may destroy the building and scatter my gold, or render it so apparent that the soldiers will take possession of it."

Monk was well acquainted with mankind ; he saw in the physiognomy of this gentleman all the energy, all the reason, all the circumspection possible ; he could therefore only attribute to a magnanimous confidence the revelation the Frenchman had made him, and he showed himself profoundly touched by it.

"Monsieur," said he, "you have augured justly by me. But is the sum worth the trouble to which you expose yourself ? Do you even believe that it can be in the place where you left it ?"

"It is there, monsieur, I do not doubt."

"That is a reply to one question ; but to the other. I asked you if the sum were so large as to lead you to expose yourself thus."

"It is really large ; yes, my lord, for it is a million I enclosed in two barrels."

"A million !" cried Monk, whom this time, in his turn, Athos looked at earnestly and long. Monk perceived this, and his mistrust returned.

"Here is a man," said he, "who is laying a snare for me. So you wish to withdraw this money, monsieur," replied he, "as I understand ?"

"If you please, my lord."

"To-day?"

"This very evening, and that on account of the circumstances I have named."

"But, monsieur," objected Monk, "General Lambert is as near the abbey where you have to act as I am. Why, then, have you not addressed yourself to him?"

"Because, my lord, when one acts in important matters, it is best to consult one's instinct before everything. Well, General Lambert does not inspire me with so much confidence as you do."

"Be it so, monsieur. I will assist you in recovering your money, if, however, it can still be there; for that is far from likely. Since 1648 twelve years have rolled away, and many events have taken place." Monk dwelt upon this point, to see if the French gentleman would seize the evasions that were open to him, but Athos did not lift his brows once.

"I assure you, my lord," he said firmly, "that my conviction is, that the two barrels have neither changed place nor master." This reply had removed one suspicion from the mind of Monk, but it had suggested another. Without doubt this Frenchman was some emissary sent to entice into error the protector of the parliament; the gold was nothing but a lure; and by the help of this they thought to excite the cupidity of the general. This gold might not exist. It was Monk's business, then, to seize in the fact of falsehood and trick, the French gentleman, and to draw from the false step itself in which his enemies wished to entrap him, a triumph for his renown. When Monk was determined how to act,—

"Monsieur," said he to Athos, "without doubt you will do me the honour to share my supper this evening?"

"Yes, my lord," replied Athos, bowing; "for you do me an honour of which I feel myself worthy, by the inclination which drew me towards you."

"It is so much the more gracious on your part to accept my invitation with such frankness, from my cooks being but few and inexpert, and from my providers having returned this evening empty-handed; so that if it had not been for a fisherman of your nation who strayed into our camp, General Monk would have gone to bed without his supper to-day. I have then some fresh fish to offer you, as the vendor assures me."

"My lord, it is principally for the sake of having the honour to pass an hour more with you."

After this exchange of civilities, during which Monk had lost nothing of his circumspection, the supper, or that which was to serve for one, had been laid upon a deal table. Monk made a sign to the Comte de la Fère to be seated at this table, and took his place opposite to him. A single dish filled with boiled fish, set before the two illustrious guests, promised more to hungry stomachs than to delicate palates. Whilst supping, that is, while eating the fish, washed down with bad ale, Monk got Athos to recount to him the last events of the Fronde, the reconciliation of M. de Condé with the king, and the probable marriage of the king with the infanta of Spain; but he avoided, as Athos himself avoided it, all allusion to the political interests which united, or rather which disunited at this time, England, France and Holland. Monk, in this conversation, convinced himself of one thing, which he must have remarked at the first words exchanged: that was, that he had to do with a man of high distinction. He could not be an assassin, and it was repugnant to Monk to believe him to be a spy; but there were sufficient *finesse* and at the same time firmness in Athos to

lead Monk to fancy he was a conspirator. When they had quitted table, "You still believe in your treasure, then, monsieur?" asked Monk.

"Yes, my lord."

"Seriously."—"Quite seriously."

"And you think you can find the place again where it was buried?"

"At the first inspection."

"Well, monsieur, from curiosity I will accompany you. And it is so much the more necessary that I should accompany you, that you would find great difficulties in passing through the camp without me or one of my lieutenants."

"General, I would not suffer you to inconvenience yourself if I did not, in fact, stand in need of your company: but, as I recognise that this company is not only honourable, but necessary, I accept it."

"Do you desire we should take any people with us?" asked Monk.

"General, I believe that would be useless, if you yourself do not see the necessity for it. Two men and a horse will suffice to transport two casks on board the felucca which brought me hither."

"But it will be necessary to pick, dig, and remove the earth, and split stones; you don't reckon upon doing this work yourself, monsieur, do you?"

"General, there is no picking or digging required. The treasure is buried in the sepulchral vault of the convent, under a stone in which is fixed a large iron ring, and under that a little stair of four steps opens. The two casks are there, placed end to end, covered with a coat of plaster in the form of a bier. There is besides an inscription, which will enable me to recognize the stone; and as I am not willing, in an affair of delicacy and confidence, to keep the secret from your honour, here is the inscription:—*'Hic jacet venerabilis, Petrus Gulielmus Scott, Canon Honorab. Conventus Novi Castell. Obiit quartâ et decimâ Feb. ann. Dom. MCCVIII. Requiescat in pace.'*"

Monk did not lose a single word. He was astonished either at the marvellous duplicity of this man, and the superior style in which he played his part, or at the good loyal faith with which he presented his request, in a situation in which was concerned a million of money, risked against the stab of a poniard, amidst an army that would have considered the theft as a restitution. "That is well," said he; "I will accompany you; and the adventure appears to me so wonderful, that I will carry the flambeau myself." And saying these words, he girded on a short sword, placed a pistol in his belt, disclosing in this movement, which opened his *pourpoint* a little, the fine rings of a coat of mail, destined to screen him from the first poniard stroke of an assassin. After which he took a Scotch dirk in his left hand, and then turning to Athos, "Are you ready, monsieur?" said he.—"I am."

Athos, as if in opposition to what Monk had done, unfastened his poniard, which he placed upon the table; unhooked his sword-belt, which he laid close to his poniard; and, without affectation opening his *pourpoint*, as if to seek his handkerchief, showed beneath his fine cambric shirt his naked breast, without arms, either offensive or defensive.

"This is truly a singular man," said Monk; "he is without any arms; he has an ambuscade placed somewhere yonder."

"General," said he, as if he had divined Monk's thought, "you wish we should be alone; that is very right, but a great captain ought never to expose himself with temerity. It is night, the passage of the march may present dangers; be accompanied."

"You are right," replied he, calling Digby. The aide-de-camp appeared.  
 "Fifty men, with swords and muskets," said he, looking at Athos.  
 "That is too few if there is danger, too many if there is not."  
 "I will go alone," said Monk; "I want nobody. Come, monsieur."

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE MARCH.

ATHOS and Monk traversed, in going from the camp towards the Tweed, that part of the ground which Digby had traversed with the fishermen coming from the Tweed to the camp. The aspect of this place, the aspect of the changes man had wrought in it, was of a nature to produce a great effect upon a lively and delicate imagination like that of Athos. Athos looked at nothing but these desolate spots; Monk looked at nothing but Athos—at Athos, who, with his eyes sometimes directed towards heaven, and sometimes towards the earth, sought, thought, and sighed. Digby, whom the last orders of the general, and particularly the accent with which he had given them, had at first a little excited, Digby followed the night-walkers about twenty paces, but the general having turned round as if astonished to find his orders had not been obeyed, the aide-de-camp perceived his indiscretion, and returned to his tent. He supposed that the general wished to make, incognito, one of those reviews of vigilance which every experienced captain never fails to make on the eve of a decisive engagement: he explained to himself the presence of Athos in this case as an inferior explains all that is mysterious on the part of his leader. Athos might be, and, indeed, in the eyes of Digby, must be, a spy, whose information was to enlighten the general.

At the end of a walk of about ten minutes among the tents and posts, which were closer together near the head-quarters, Monk entered upon a little causeway which diverged into three branches. That on the left led to the river, that in the middle to Newcastle Abbey on the marsh, that on the right crossed the first lines of Monk's camp; that is to say, the lines nearest to Lambert's army. Beyond the river was an advanced post, belonging to Monk's army, which watched the enemy; it was composed of one hundred and fifty Scots. They had swum across the Tweed, and, in case of attack, were to recross it in the same manner, giving the alarm; but as there was no post at that spot, and as Lambert's soldiers were not so prompt at taking to the water as Monk's were, the latter appeared not to have much uneasiness on that side. On this side of the river, at about five hundred paces from the old abbey, the fishermen had taken up their abode amidst a crowd of small tents raised by the soldiers of the neighbouring clans, who had with them their wives and children. All this confusion, seen by the moon's light, presented a striking *coup d'œil*; the half-shade enlarged every detail, and the light, that flatterer which only attaches itself to the polished side of things, courted upon each rusty musket the point still left intact, and upon every rag of canvas the whitest and least sullied part. Monk arrived then with Athos, crossing this spot, illumined by a double light, the silver splendour of the moon, and the red blaze of the fires at the meeting of the three causeways; there he stopped, and addressing his companion,—“Monsieur,” said he, “do you know your road?”

“General, if I am not mistaken, the middle causeway leads straight to the abbey.”

"That is right ; but we shall want lights to guide us in the vaults." Monk turned round.

"Ah ! I thought Digby was following us !" said he. "So much the better ; he will procure us what we want."

"Yes, general, there is a man yonder who for some time has been walking behind us."

"Digby !" cried Monk, "Digby ! come here, if you please."

But, instead of obeying, the shadow made a motion of surprise, and, retreating instead of advancing, it bent down and disappeared along the jetty on the left, directing its course towards the lodging of the fishermen.

"It appears not to be Digby," said Monk.

Both had followed the shadow which had vanished. But it was not so rare a thing for a man to be wandering about at eleven o'clock at night, in a camp in which are reposing ten or eleven thousand men, as to give Monk and Athos any alarm at his disappearance.

"As it is so," said Monk, "and we must have a light, a lantern, a torch, or something by which we may see where to set our feet, let us seek this light."

"General, the first soldier we meet will light us."

"No," said Monk, in order to discover if there were not any connivance between the Comte de la Fère and the fishermen. "No, I should prefer one of these French sailors who came this evening to sell me their fish. They will leave to-morrow, and the secret will be better kept by them ; whereas, if a report should be spread in the Scotch army, that treasures are to be found in the abbey of Newcastle, my Highlanders will believe there is a million concealed beneath every slab ; and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in the building."

"Do as you think best, general," replied Athos, in so natural a tone of voice, as made it evident that soldier or fisherman was the same to him, and that he had no preference.

Monk approached the causeway behind which had disappeared the person he had taken for Digby, and met a patrol who, making the tour of the tents, was going towards head-quarters ; he was stopped with his companion, gave the pass-word, and went on. A soldier, roused by the noise, unrolled his plaid, and looked up to see what was going forward. "Ask him," said Monk to Athos, "where the fishermen are ; if I were to speak to him, he would know me."

Athos went up to the soldier, who pointed out the tent to him ; immediately Monk and Athos turned towards it. It appeared to the general that at the moment they came up, a shadow, like to that they had already seen, glided into this tent ; but, on drawing nearer, he perceived he must have been mistaken, for all of them were asleep *pêle mêle*, and nothing was seen but arms and legs joined, crossed, and mixed. Athos, fearing he should be suspected of connivance with some of his compatriots, remained outside the tent.

"*Holâ !*" said Monk, in French, "wake up here." Two or three of the sleepers got up. "I want a man to light me," continued Monk.

"Your honour may depend upon us," said a voice which made Athos start. "Where do you wish us to go ?"

"You shall see. A light ! come, quickly !"

"Yes, your honour. Does it please your honour that I should accompany you ?"

"You or another, it is of very little consequence, provided I have a light."

"It is strange !" thought Athos ; " what a singular voice that man has !"

" Some fire, you sirs !" cried the fisherman ; " come, make haste !"

Then addressing in a low voice his companion nearest to him :—" Get a light, Menneville," said he, " and hold yourself ready for anything."

One of the fishermen struck light from a stone, set fire to some tinder, and by the aid of a match lit a lantern. The light immediately spread all over the tent."

" Are you ready, monsieur !" said Monk to Athos, who had turned away, not to expose his face to the light.

" Yes, general," replied he.

" Ah ! the French gentleman !" said the leader of the fishermen to himself. "*Peste !* I have a great mind to charge you with the commission, Menneville ; he may know me. Light ! light !" This dialogue was pronounced at the back of the tent, and in so low a voice that Monk could not hear a syllable of it ; he was, besides, talking with Athos. Menneville got himself ready in the meantime, or rather received the orders of his leader.

" Well ?" said Monk.

" I am ready, general," said the fisherman.

Monk, Athos, and the fisherman left the tent.

" It is impossible !" thought Athos. " What dream could put that into my head ?"

" Go forward ; follow the middle causeway, and stretch out your legs," said Monk to the fisherman.

They were not twenty paces on their way, when the same shadow that had appeared to enter the tent came out of it again, crawled along as far as the piles, and, protected by that sort of parapet placed along the causeway, carefully observed the march of the general. All three disappeared in the night haze. They were walking towards Newcastle, the white stones of which appeared to them like sepulchres. After standing for a few seconds under the porch, they penetrated into the interior. The door had been broken open by hatchets. A post of four men slept in safety in a corner ; so certain were they that the attack would not take place on that side.

" Will not these men be in your way ?" said Monk to Athos.

" On the contrary, monsieur, they will assist in rolling out the barrels, if your honour will permit them."

" You are right."

The post, however fast asleep, roused up at the first steps of the three visitors amongst the briars and grass that invaded the porch. Monk gave the pass-word, and penetrated into the interior of the convent, preceded by the light. He walked last, watching even the least movement of Athos, his naked dirk in his sleeve, and ready to plunge it into the reins of the gentleman at the first suspicious gesture he should see him make. But Athos, with a firm and sure step, traversed the chambers and courts. Not a door, not a window was left in this building. The doors had been burnt, some upon the spot, and the charcoal of them was still jagged with the action of the fire, which had gone out of itself, powerless, no doubt, to get to the heart of those massive joints of oak fastened together by iron nails. As to the windows, all the panes having been broken, birds of darkness, alarmed by the torch, flew away through the holes of them. At the same time, gigantic bats began to trace their vast, silent circles around the intruders, whilst their shadows appeared trembling upon the lofty stone walls in the light projected by the torch. Monk concluded

there could be no man in the convent, since wild beasts and birds were there still, and fled away at his approach. After having passed the rubbish, and torn away more than one branch of ivy that had made itself a guardian for the solitude, Athos arrived at the vaults situated beneath the great hall, but the entrance of which was from the chapel. There he stopped. "Here we are, general," said he.

"This, then, is the slab?"

"Yes."

"Ay, and here is the ring—but the ring is sealed into the stone."

"We must have a lever."

"That's a thing very easy to find."

Whilst looking round them, Athos and Monk perceived a little ash of about three inches in diameter, which had shot up in an angle of the wall, reaching to a window, which its branches darkened.

"Have you a knife?" said Monk to the fisherman.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Cut down this tree, then."

The fisherman obeyed, but not without notching his cutlass. When the ash was cut and fashioned into the shape of a lever, the three men penetrated into the vault.

"Stop where you are," said Monk to the fisherman. "We are going to dig up some powder; your light may be dangerous."

The man drew back in a sort of terror, and faithfully kept to the post assigned him, whilst Monk and Athos turned behind a column at the foot of which, through a spiracle, penetrated a moonbeam, reflected exactly by the stone of which the Comte de la Fère had come so far in search.

"This is it," said Athos, pointing out to the general the Latin inscription.

"Yes," said Monk.

Then, as if still willing to leave the Frenchman one means of evasion,—

"Do you not observe that this vault has already been broken into," continued he, "and that several statues have been knocked down?"

"My lord, you have, without doubt, heard say that the religious respect of your Scots loves to confide to the statues of the dead the valuable objects they have possessed during their lives. Therefore the soldiers had reason to think that under the pedestals of the statues which ornament most of these tombs, a treasure was hidden. They have consequently broken down pedestal and statue: but the tomb of the venerable canon, with which we have to do, is not distinguished by any monument. It is simple, therefore it has been protected by the superstitious fear which your puritans have always had of sacrilege. Not a morsel of the masonry of this tomb has been chipped off."

"That is true," said Monk.

Athos seized the lever.

"Shall I help you?" said Monk.

"Thank you, my lord; but I am not willing your honour should put your hand to a work of which, perhaps, you would not take the responsibility if you knew the probable consequences of it."

Monk raised his head.

"What do you mean by that, monsieur?"

"I mean—but that man—"

"Stop," said Monk; "I perceive what you are afraid of. I will make a trial." Monk turned towards the fisherman, the whole of whose profile was thrown upon the wall.

"Come here, friend!" said he in English, and in a tone of command.

The fisherman did not stir.

"That is well," continued he : "he does not know English. Speak to me, then, in English, if you please, monsieur."

"My lord," replied Athos, "I have frequently seen men in certain circumstances have the command over themselves not to reply to a question put to them in a language they understood. The fisherman is perhaps more learned than we believe him to be. Send him away, my lord, I beg of you."

"Decidedly," said Monk, "he wishes to have me alone in this vault. Never mind, we will go through with it ; one man is as good as another man ; and we are alone.—My friend," said Monk to the fisherman, "go back up the stairs we have just descended, and watch that nobody comes to disturb us." The fisherman made a sign of obedience. "Leave your torch," said Monk ; "it would betray your presence, and might procure you a musket-ball."

The fisherman appeared to appreciate the counsel ; he laid down the light, and disappeared under the vault of the stairs. Monk took up the torch, and brought it to the foot of the column.

"Ah, ah !" said he ; "money, then, is concealed under this tomb?"

"Yes, my lord ; and in five minutes you will no longer doubt it."

At the same time Athos struck a violent blow upon the plaster, which split, presenting a chink for the point of the lever. Athos introduced the bar into this crack, and soon large pieces of plaster yielded, rising up like rounded slabs. Then the Comte de la Fère seized the stones and threw them away with a force that hands so delicate as his might not have been supposed capable of.

"My lord," said Athos, "this is plainly the masonry of which I told your honour."

"Yes ; but I do not yet see the casks," said Monk.

"If I had a poniard," said Athos, looking round him, "you should soon see them, monsieur. Unfortunately I left mine in your tent."

"I would willingly offer you mine," said Monk, "but the blade is too thin for such work."

Athos appeared to look around him for a thing of some kind that might serve as a substitute for the arm he desired. Monk did not lose one of the movements of his hands, or one of the expressions of his eyes. "Why do you not ask the fisherman for his cutlass?" said Monk ; "he has a cutlass."

"Ah ! that is true," said Athos ; "for he cut the tree down with it." And he advanced towards the stairs.

"Friend," said he to the fisherman, "throw me down your cutlass, if you please ; I want it."

The noise of the falling arm resounded over the marshes.

"Take it," said Monk ; "it is a solid instrument, as I have seen, and of which a strong hand might make good use."

Athos only appeared to give to the words of Monk the natural and simple sense under which they were to be heard and understood. Nor did he remark, or at least appear to remark, that when he returned with the weapon, Monk drew back, placing his left hand on the stock of his pistol ; in the right he already held his dirk. He went to work then, turning his back to Monk, placing his life in his hands, without possible defence. He then struck, during several seconds, so skilfully and sharply upon the intermediary plaster, that it separated in two parts, and Monk was able to discern two barrels placed end to end, and which their weight maintained motionless in their chalky envelope.

"My lord," said Athos, "you see that my presentiments have not been disappointed."

"Yes, monsieur," said Monk, "and I have good reason to believe you are satisfied ; are you not ?"

"Doubtless I am ; the loss of this money would have been inexpressibly great to me ; but I was certain that God, who protects the good cause, would not have permitted this gold, which should procure its triumph, to be diverted to baser purposes."

"You are, upon my honour, as mysterious in your words as in your actions, monsieur," said Monk. "Just now I did not perfectly understand you when you said that you were not willing to throw upon me the responsibility of the work we were accomplishing."

"I had reason to say so, my lord."

"And now you speak to me of the good cause. What do you mean by the words 'the good cause?' We are defending at this moment, in England, five or six causes, which does not prevent every one from considering his own, not only as the good cause, but as the best. What is yours, monsieur? Speak boldly, that we may see if, upon this point, to which you appear to attach a great importance, we are of the same opinion."

Athos fixed upon Monk one of those penetrating looks which seem to convey, to him they are directed to, a challenge to conceal a single one of his thoughts ; then, taking off his hat, he began in a solemn voice, while his interlocutor, with one hand upon his visage, allowed that long and nervous hand to compress his moustache and beard, at the same time that his vague and melancholy eye wandered about the recesses of the vaults.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### HEART AND MIND.

"My lord," said the Comte de la Fère, "you are a noble Englishman, you are a loyal man ; you are speaking to a noble Frenchman, to a man of heart. This gold contained in these two casks before us, I have told you was mine. I was wrong—it is the first lie I have pronounced in my life, a temporary lie, it is true. This gold is the property of King Charles II., exiled from his country, driven from his palaces, the orphan at once of his father and his throne, and deprived of everything, even of the melancholy happiness of kissing on his knees the stone upon which the hands of his murderers have written that simple epitaph which will eternally cry out for vengeance upon them :—'HERE LIES CHARLES I.'"

Monk grew slightly pale, and an imperceptible shudder crept over his skin and raised his grey moustache.

"I," continued Athos, "I, Comte de la Fère, the last, the only faithful friend the poor abandoned prince has left, I have offered him to come hither to find the man upon whom now depends the fate of royalty and of England ; and I am come, and have placed myself under the eye of this man, and have placed myself naked and unarmed in his hands, saying :—'My lord, here is the last resource of a prince whom God made your master, whom his birth made your king ; upon you, and you alone, depend his life and his future. Will you employ this money in consoling England for the evils it must have suffered from anarchy ; that is to say, will you aid, and if not aid, will you allow to act, King Charles II. ? You are master, you are king, all-powerful master and King, for chance sometimes defeats the work of time and God. I am here alone with you, my

lord : if the success being divided alarms you, if my complicity annoys you, you are armed, my lord, and here is a grave ready-dug ; if, on the contrary, the enthusiasm of your cause carries you away, if you are what you appear to be, if your hand in what it undertakes obeys your mind, and your mind your heart, here are the means of ruining for ever the cause of your enemy, Charles Stuart. Kill, then, the man you have before you, for that man will never return to him who has sent him without bearing with him the deposit which Charles I., his father, confided to him, and keep the gold which may assist in carrying on the civil war. Alas ! my lord, it is the fate of this unfortunate prince. He must either corrupt or kill, for everything resists him, everything repulses him, everything is hostile to him ; and yet he is marked with the divine seal, and he must, not to belie his blood, reascend the throne, or die upon the sacred soil of his country.

"My lord, you have heard me. To any other but the illustrious man who listens to me, I would have said : 'My lord, you are poor ; my lord, the king offers you this million as an earnest of an immense bargain ; take it, and serve Charles II. as I served Charles I., and I feel assured that God who listens to us, who sees us, who alone reads in your heart, shut up from all human eyes,—I am assured God will give you a happy eternal life after a happy death.' But to General Monk, to the illustrious man of whose standard I believe I have taken measure, I say : 'My lord, there is for you in the history of peoples and kings a brilliant place, an immortal, imperishable glory, if alone, without any other interests but the good of your country and the interests of justice, you become the supporter of your king. Many others have been conquerors and glorious usurpers ; you, my lord, you will be content with being the most virtuous, the most honest, and the most incorrupt of men : you will have held a crown in your hand, and instead of placing it upon your own brow, you will have deposited it upon the head of him for whom it was made. Oh, my lord, act thus, and you will leave to posterity the most enviable of names, in which no human creature can rival you.'"

Athos stopped. During the whole time that the noble gentleman was speaking, Monk had not given one sign of either approbation or disapprobation ; scarcely even, during this vehement appeal, had his eyes been animated with that fire which bespeaks intelligence. The Comte de la Fère looked at him sorrowfully, and on seeing that melancholy countenance, felt discouragement penetrate to his very heart. At length Monk appeared to recover, and broke the silence.

"Monsieur," said he, in a mild, calm tone, "in reply to you, I will make use of your own words. To any other but yourself I would reply by expulsion, imprisonment, or still worse ; for, in fact, you tempt me and you force me at the same time. But you are one of those men, monsieur, to whom it is impossible to refuse the attention and respect they merit ; you are a brave gentleman, monsieur—I say so, and I am a judge. You just now spoke of a deposit which the late king transmitted through you to his son—are you, then, one of those Frenchmen who, as I have heard, endeavoured to carry off Charles I. from Whitehall?"

"Yes, my lord ; it was I who was beneath the scaffold during the execution ; I, who had not been able to redeem it, received upon my brow the blood of the martyred king. I received, at the same time, the last word of Charles I. ; it was to me he said, 'REMEMBER !' and in saying, 'Remember !' he made allusion to the money at your feet, my lord."

"I have heard much of you, monsieur," said Monk, "but I am happy to have, in the first place, appreciated you by my own observations, and not

by my remembrances. I will give you, then, explanations that I have given to no other, and you will appreciate what a distinction I make between you and the persons who have hitherto been sent to me."

Athos bowed, and prepared to absorb greedily the words which fell, one by one, from the mouth of Monk,—those words rare and precious as the dew in the desert.

"You spoke to me," said Monk, "of Charles II. : but pray, monsieur, of what consequence to me is that phantom of a king? I have grown old in a war and in a policy which are nowadays so closely linked together, that every man of the sword must fight in virtue of his rights or his ambition with a personal interest, and not blindly behind an officer, as in ordinary wars. For myself, I perhaps desire nothing, but I fear much. In the war of to-day resides the liberty of England, and perhaps that of every Englishman. How can you expect that I, free in the position I have made for myself, should go willingly and hold out my hands to the shackles of a stranger? That is all Charles is to me. He has fought battles here which he has lost, he is therefore a bad captain; he has succeeded in no negotiation, he is therefore a bad diplomatist; he has paraded his wants and his miseries in all the courts of Europe, he has therefore a weak and pusillanimous heart. Nothing noble, nothing great, nothing strong, has hitherto emanated from that genius which aspires to govern one of the greatest kingdoms of the earth. I know this Charles, then, under none but bad aspects, and you would wish me, a man of good sense, to go and make myself gratuitously the slave of a creature who is inferior to me in military capacity, in politics, and in dignity! No, monsieur. When some great and noble action shall have taught me to value Charles, I will perhaps recognise his rights to a throne from which we have cast the father because he wanted the virtues which his son has to this time wanted; but hitherto, in fact of rights, I only recognise my own: the revolution made me a general, my sword will make me protector, if I wish it. Let Charles show himself, let him present himself, let him pass through the concurrence open to genius, and, above all, let him remember that he is of a race from whom more will be looked for than from any other. Therefore, monsieur, say no more about him. I neither refuse nor accept: I reserve myself—I wait."

Athos knew Monk to be too well informed of all concerning Charles to venture to urge the discussion further; it was neither the time nor the place. "My lord," then said he, "I have nothing to do but to thank you."

"And for what, monsieur? For your having formed a correct opinion of me, and for my having acted according to your judgment? Is that, in truth, worthy of thanks? This gold which you are about to carry to Charles, will serve me as a test for him, by seeing the use he will make of it. I shall have an opinion which now I have not."

"And yet does not your honour fear to compromise yourself by allowing such a sum to be carried away for the service of your enemy?"

"My enemy, say you? Eh, monsieur, I have no enemies. I am in the service of the parliament, which orders me to combat General Lambert and Charles Stuart—its enemies, and not mine. I combat them. If the parliament, on the contrary, ordered me to unfurl my standards on the port of London, to assemble my soldiers on the banks to receive Charles II. —"

"You would obey?" cried Athos, joyfully.

"Pardon me," said Monk, smiling, "I was going—I, a grey-headed man

—in truth, how did I forget myself? I was going to speak like a foolish young man."

"Then you would not obey?" said Athos.

"I do not say that either, monsieur. The welfare of my country before everything. God, who has given me the power, has, no doubt, willed that I should have that power for the good of all ; and He has given me, at the same time, discernment. If the parliament were to order such a thing, I should reflect."

The brow of Athos became clouded. "Then I may decidedly say that your honour is not inclined to favour King Charles II.?"

"You continue to question me, Monsieur le Comte ; allow me, in my turn, if you please."

"Do, monsieur ; and may God inspire you with the idea of replying to me as frankly as I will reply to you."

"When you shall have taken this money back to your prince, what advice will you give him?"

Athos fixed upon Monk a proud and resolute look. "My lord," said he, "with this million, which others would perhaps employ in negotiating, I would advise the king to raise two regiments, to enter by Scotland, which you have just pacified ; to give to the people the franchises which the revolution promised them, and in which it has not, in all cases, kept its word. I should advise him to command in person this little army, which would, believe me, increase, and to die, standard in hand, and sword in its sheath, saying, 'Englishmen ! I am the third king of my race you have killed ; beware of the justice of God !'"

Monk hung down his head, and mused for an instant. "If he succeeded," said he, "which is very improbable, but not impossible—for everything is possible in this world—what would you advise him to do?"

"To think that by the will of God he lost his crown, but by the good will of men he has recovered it."

An ironical smile passed over the lips of Monk. "Unfortunately, monsieur," said he, "kings do not know how to follow good advice."

"Ah, my lord, Charles II. is not a king," replied Athos, smiling in his turn, but with a very different expression than Monk had done.

"Let us terminate this, Monsieur le Comte,—that is your desire, is it not?"

Athos bowed.

"I will give orders that these two casks shall be transported whither you please. Where are you lodging, monsieur?"

"In a little bourg at the mouth of the river, your honour."

"Oh, I know the bourg ; it consists of five or six houses, does it not?"

"Exactly. Well, I inhabit the first,—two net-makers occupy it with me ; it is their barque which placed me on shore."

"But your own vessel, monsieur?"

"My vessel is at anchor, a quarter of a mile at sea, and waits for me."

"You do not think, however, of setting out immediately?"

"My lord, I shall try once more to convince your honour."

"You will not succeed," replied Monk ; "but it is of consequence that you should quit Newcastle without leaving on your passage the least suspicion that might prove injurious to me or you. To-morrow my officers think Lambert will attack me. I, on the contrary, will be bound he will not stir ; it is, in my opinion, impossible. Lambert leads an army devoid of homogeneous principles, and there is no possible army with such elements. I have taught my soldiers to consider my authority subordinate

to another, which causes that after me, around me, and beneath me, they still look for something. It would result, that if I were dead, whatever might happen, my army would not be demoralised all at once ; it results, that if I chose to absent myself, for instance, as it does please me to do sometimes, there would not be in my camp the shadow of uneasiness or disorder. I am the magnet—the sympathetic and natural strength of the English. All those scattered arms that will be sent against me I shall attract to myself. Lambert, at this moment, commands eighteen thousand deserters ; but I have never mentioned that to my officers, you may easily suppose. Nothing is more useful to an army than the expectation of a coming battle : everybody is awake—everybody is on his guard. I tell you this that you may live in perfect security. Do not be in a hurry, then, to cross the seas ; within a week there will be something fresh, either a battle or an accommodation. Then, as you have judged me to be an honourable man, and confided your secret to me, I have to thank you for this confidence, and I will come and pay you a visit or send for you. Do not go before I send you word. I repeat the request.”

“I promise you, general,” cried Athos, with a joy so great, that, in spite of all his circumspection, he could not prevent its sparkling in his eyes.

Monk surprised this flash, and immediately extinguished it by one of those mute smiles which always broke, between these two interlocutors, the way which Athos believed he had made in his mind.

“Then, my lord, it is a week that you desire me to wait?”

“A week? yes, monsieur.”

“And during these days what shall I do?”

“If there should be a battle, keep at a distance from it, I conjure you. I know the French delight in such amusements ;—you might take a fancy to see how we fight, and you might meet with some chance shot. Our Scotchmen are very bad marksmen, and I do not wish that a worthy gentleman like you should return to France wounded. I should not like either to be obliged, myself, to send to your prince his million left here by you ; for then it would be said, and with reason, that I paid the pretender to enable him to make war against the parliament. Go, then, monsieur, and let it be done as has been agreed upon.”

“Ah, my lord,” said Athos, “what joy it would give me to be the first that penetrated to the noble heart which beats beneath that cloak !”

“You decidedly think, then, that I have secrets,” said Monk, without changing the half-cheerful expression of his countenance. “Why, monsieur, what secret can you expect to find in the hollow head of a soldier ? But it is getting late, and our torch is almost out ; let us call our man.”

“*Holà !*” cried Monk in French approaching the stairs ; “*holà !* fisherman !”

The fisherman, benumbed by the cold night-air, replied in a hoarse voice, asking what they wanted of him.

“Go to the post,” said Monk, “and order a sergeant, in the name of General Monk, to come here immediately.”

This was a commission easily performed ; for the sergeant, uneasy at the general’s being in that desolate abbey, had drawn nearer by degrees, and was not much further off than the fisherman. The general’s order was therefore heard by him, and he hastened to obey it.

“Get a horse and two men,” said Monk.

“A horse and two men?” repeated the sergeant.

“Yes,” replied Monk. “Have you any means of getting a horse with a pack-saddle or two paniers?”

"No doubt, at a hundred paces off, in the Scotch camp."

"Very well."

"What shall I do with the horse, general?"

"Look here."

The sergeant descended the three steps, which separated him from Monk, and came into the vault.

"You see," said Monk, "that gentleman yonder?"

"Yes, general."

"And you see these two casks?"

"Perfectly."

"They are two casks, one containing powder, and the other balls; I wish these casks to be transported to the little bourg at the mouth of the river, and which I reckon upon occupying to-morrow with two hundred muskets. You understand that the commission is a secret one, for it is a movement that may decide the fate of the battle."

"Oh, general!" murmured the sergeant.

"Mind, then! Let these casks be fastened on to the horse, and let them be escorted by two men and you to the residence of this gentleman, who is my friend. But take care that nobody knows it."

"I would go by the marsh if I knew the road," said the sergeant.

"I know one myself," said Athos; "it is not wide, but it is solid, having been made upon piles; and with precaution we shall get there safely enough."

"Do everything this gentleman shall order you to do."

"Oh! oh! the casks are heavy," said the sergeant, trying to lift one.

"They weigh four hundred pounds each, if they contain what they ought to contain, do they not, monsieur?"

"Thereabouts," said Athos.

The sergeant went in search of the two men and the horse. Monk, left alone with Athos, affected to speak to him of nothing but indifferent things, while examining the vault in a cursory manner. Then, hearing the horse's steps,—

"I leave you with your men, monsieur," said he, "and return to the camp. You are perfectly safe."

"I shall see you again, then, my lord?" asked Athos.

"That is agreed upon, monsieur, and with much pleasure."

Monk held out his hand to Athos.

"Ah! my lord, if you would!" murmured Athos.

"Hush! Monsieur, it is agreed that we shall speak no more of that." And bowing to Athos, he went up the stairs, passing, about the middle of them, his men who were coming down. He had not gone twenty paces, when a faint but prolonged whistle was heard at a distance. Monk listened, but seeing nothing and hearing nothing, he continued his route. Then he remembered the fisherman, and looked about for him; but the fisherman had disappeared. If he had, however, looked with more attention, he might have seen that man, bent double, gliding like a serpent along the stones and losing himself in the mist, floating over the surface of the marsh. He might have equally seen, attempting to pierce that mist, a spectacle that might have attracted his attention; and that was the rigging of the vessel, which had changed place, and was now nearer the shore. But Monk saw nothing; and thinking he had nothing to fear, he entered the desert causeway which led to his camp. It was then that the disappearance of the fisherman appeared strange, and that a real suspicion began to take possession of his mind. He had just placed at the orders of

Athos the only post that could protect him. He had a mile of causeway to traverse before he could regain his camp. The fog increased with such intensity that he could scarcely distinguish objects at ten paces' distance. Monk then thought he heard the sound of an oar over the marsh on the right. "Who goes there?" said he.

But nobody answered; then he cocked his pistol, took his sword in his hand, and quickened his pace, without, however, being willing to call anybody. Such a summons, for which there was no absolute necessity, appeared unworthy of him.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE NEXT DAY.

It was seven o'clock in the morning, the first rays of day lightened the pools of the marsh, in which the sun was reflected like a red ball, when Athos awaking and opening the window of his bed-chamber, which looked out upon the banks of the river, perceived, at fifteen paces' distance from him, the sergeant and the men who had accompanied him the evening before, and who, after having deposited his casks at his house, had returned to the camp by the causeway on the right.

For what could these men, after having returned to the camp, come back? That was the question which first presented itself to Athos. The sergeant, with his head raised, appeared to be watching the moment when the gentleman should appear, to address him. Athos, surprised to see these men there, whom he had seen depart the night before, could not prevent himself from expressing his astonishment to them.

"There is nothing surprising in that, monsieur," said the sergeant; "for yesterday the general commanded me to watch over your safety, and I thought it right to obey that order."

"Is the general at the camp?" asked Athos.

"No doubt he is, monsieur; as when he left you he was going back."

"Well, wait for me a moment; I am going thither to render an account of the fidelity with which you fulfilled your duty, and to get my sword, which I left upon the table in the tent."

"That falls out very well," said the sergeant, "for we were about to request you to do so."

Athos fancied he could detect an air of equivocal *bonhomie* upon the countenance of the sergeant; but the adventure of the vault might have excited the curiosity of the man, and he was not surprised that he allowed some of the feelings which agitated his mind to appear in his face. Athos closed the doors carefully, confiding the keys to Grimaud, who had chosen his domicile beneath the shed itself, which led to the cellar where the casks had been deposited. The sergeant escorted the Comte de la Fère to the camp. There a fresh guard awaited him, and relieved the four men who had conducted Athos. This fresh guard was commanded by the aide-camp Digby, who, on their way, fixed upon Athos looks so little encouraging, that the Frenchman asked himself, whence arose, with regard to him, this vigilance and this severity, when the evening before he had been left perfectly free. He continued his way not the less to the headquarters, keeping to himself the observations which men and things forced him to make. He found under the general's tent, to which he had been introduced the evening before, three superior officers: these were Monk's lieutenant and two colonels. Athos perceived his sword; it was still on

the table where he had left it. Neither of the officers had seen Athos, consequently neither of them knew him. Monk's lieutenant asked, at the appearance of Athos, if that were the same gentleman with whom the general had left the tent.

"Yes, your honour," said the sergeant; "it is the same."

"But," said Athos, haughtily, "I do not deny it, I think; and now, gentlemen, in my turn, permit me to ask you to what purpose are these questions asked, and particularly some explanation upon the tone in which you ask them?"

"Monsieur," said the lieutenant, "if we address these questions to you, it is because we have a right to do so, and if we make them in a particular tone, it is because that tone, believe me, agrees with the circumstances."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "you do not know who I am; but I must tell you I acknowledge no one here but General Monk as my equal. Where is he? Let me be conducted to him, and if he has any questions to put to me, I will answer him, and to his satisfaction, I hope. I repeat, gentlemen, where is the general?"

"Eh! good God! you know better than we do where he is," said the lieutenant.

"I?"—"Yes, you."

"Monsieur," said Athos, "I do not understand you."

"You will understand me—and, on your part, in the first place, do not speak so loud."

Athos smiled disdainfully.

"We don't ask you to smile," said one of the colonels warmly; "we require you to answer."

"And I, gentlemen, declare to you that I will not reply until I am in the presence of the general."

"But," replied the same colonel who had already spoken, "you know very well that that is impossible."

"This is the second time I have received this strange reply to the wish I express," said Athos. "Is the general absent?"

This question was made with such apparent good faith, and the gentleman wore an air of such natural surprise, that the three officers exchanged a meaning look. The lieutenant, by a tacit convention with the other two, was spokesman.

"Monsieur, the general left you last night in the boundaries of the monastery?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And you went——"

"It is not for me to answer you, but for those who have accompanied me. They were your soldiers, ask them."

"But if we please to interrogate you?"

"Then it will please me to reply, monsieur, that I do not appeal to anyone here, that I know no one here but the general, and that it is to him alone I will reply."

"So be it, monsieur; but as we are the masters, we constitute ourselves a council of war, and when you are before judges you must reply."

The countenance of Athos expressed nothing but astonishment and disdain, instead of the terror the officers expected to read in it at this threat.

"Scotch or English judges upon me, a subject of the king of France; upon me, placed under the safeguard of British honour! You are mad, gentlemen!" said Athos, shrugging his shoulders.

The officers looked at each other. "Then, monsieur," said one of them, "do you pretend not to know where the general is?"

"To that, monsieur, I have already replied."

"Yes, but you have already replied an incredible thing."

"It is true, nevertheless, gentlemen. Men of my rank are not generally liars. I am a gentleman, I have told you, and when I have at my side the sword which, by an excess of delicacy, I last night left upon the table whereon it still lies, believe me, no man says that to me which I am unwilling to hear. I am at this moment disarmed; if you pretend to be my judges, try me; if you are but my executioners, kill me."

"But, monsieur——" asked the lieutenant, in a more courteous voice, struck with the lofty coolness of Athos.

"Monsieur, I came to speak confidentially with your general about affairs of importance. It was not an ordinary welcome that he gave me. The accounts your soldiers can give you may convince you of that. If, then, the general received me in that manner, he knew what were my titles to his esteem. Now, you do not suspect, I should think, that I should reveal my secrets to you, and still less his."

"But these casks, what do they contain?"

"Have you not put that question to your soldiers? What was their reply?"

"That they contained powder and ball."

"From whom had they that information. They must have told you that."

"From the general; but we are not dupes."

"Beware, gentlemen; it is not to me you are now giving the lie, it is to your leader."

The officers again looked at each other. Athos continued: "Before your soldiers the general told me to wait a week, and at the expiration of that week he would give me the answer he had to make me. Have I fled away? No; I wait."

"He told you to wait a week!" cried the lieutenant.

"He told me so clearly so, monsieur, that I have a sloop at the mouth of the river, which I could with ease have joined yesterday, and embarked. Now, if I have remained, it was only in compliance with the desire of your general; his honour having requested me not to depart without a last audience, which he fixed at a week hence. I repeat to you then, I am waiting."

The lieutenant turned towards the other officers, and said, in a low voice: "If this gentleman speaks truth, there may still be some hope. The general may be carrying out some negotiations so secret, that he thought it imprudent to inform even us. Then the time limited for his absence would be a week." Then, turning towards Athos: "Monsieur," said he, "your declaration is of the most serious importance; are you willing to repeat it under the seal of an oath?"

"Monsieur," replied Athos, "I have always lived in a world where my simple word was regarded as the most sacred of oaths."

"This time, however, monsieur, the circumstance is more grave than any you may have been placed in. The safety of the whole army is at stake. Reflect; the general has disappeared, and our search for him has been vain. Is this disappearance natural? Has a crime been committed? Are we not bound to carry our investigations to extremity? Have we any right to wait with patience? At this moment, everything, monsieur, depends upon the words you are about to pronounce."

"Interrogated thus, monsieur, I no longer hesitate," said Athos. "Yes,

I came hither to converse confidentially with General Monk, and to ask of him an answer regarding certain interests ; yes, the general being, doubtless, unable to pronounce before the expected battle, begged me to remain a week in the house I inhabit, promising me that in a week I should see him again. Yes, all this is true, and I swear it, by the God who is the absolute master of my life and yours." Athos pronounced these words with so much grandeur and solemnity, that the three officers were almost convinced. Nevertheless, one of the colonels made a last attempt.

"Monsieur," said he, "although we may be now persuaded of the truth of what you say, there is yet a strange mystery in all this. The general is too prudent a man to have thus abandoned his army on the eve of a battle, without having at least given to one of us a notice of it. As for myself, I cannot believe but that some strange event has been the cause of this disappearance. Yesterday some foreign fishermen came to sell their fish here ; they were lodged yonder among the Scots ; that is to say, on the road the general took with this gentleman, to go to the abbey, and to return from it. It was one of those fishermen that accompanied the general with a light. And this morning, barque and fishermen have all disappeared, carried away by the night's tide."

"For my part," said the lieutenant, "I see nothing in that, that is not quite natural, for these people were not prisoners."

"No ; but I repeat it was one of them who lit the general and this gentleman to the abbey, and Digby assures us that the general had strong suspicions concerning those people. Now, who can say whether these people were not connected with this gentleman ; and that, the blow being struck, the gentleman, who is evidently brave, did not remain to reassure us by his presence, and to prevent our researches being made in a right direction?"

This speech made an impression upon the other two officers.

"Monsieur," said Athos, "permit me to tell you, that your reasoning, though specious in appearance, nevertheless wants consistency, as regards me. I have remained, you say, to divert suspicion. Well ! on the contrary, suspicions arise in me as well as in you ; and I say, it is impossible, gentlemen, that the general, on the eve of a battle, should leave his army without saying anything to, at least, one of his officers. Yes, there is some strange event connected with this ; yes, instead of being idle and waiting, you must display all the activity, and all the vigilance possible. I am your prisoner, gentlemen, upon parole or otherwise. My honour is concerned in the ascertaining of what is become of General Monk, and to such a point, that if you were to say to me, 'Depart !' I should reply : 'No, I will remain !' And if you were to ask my opinion, I should add : 'Yes, the general is the victim of some conspiracy ; for, if he had intended to leave the camp he would have told me so.' Seek then, search the land, search the sea ; the general has not gone with his own good will."

The lieutenant made a sign to the two other officers.

"No, monsieur," said he, "no ; in your turn you go too far. The general has nothing to suffer from these events, and no doubt, has directed them. What Monk is now doing he has often done before. We are wrong in alarming ourselves ; his absence will, doubtless, be of short duration ; therefore, let us beware, lest by a pusillanimity which the general would consider a crime, of making his absence public ; and by that means demoralizing the army. The general gives a striking proof of his confidence in us ; let us show ourselves worthy of it. Gentlemen, let the most profound silence cover all this with an impenetrable veil ; we will detain

this gentleman, not from mistrust of him with regard to the crime, but to assure more effectively the secrecy of the absence of the general, and the concentrating of it among ourselves ; therefore, until fresh orders, the gentleman will remain at head-quarters."

"Gentlemen," said Athos, "you forget that last night the general confided to me a deposit over which I am bound to watch. Give me whatever guard you like, enchain me if you like, but leave me the house I inhabit for my prison. The general, on his return, would reproach you, I swear on the honour of a gentleman, for having displeased him in this."

"So be it, monsieur," said the lieutenant ; "return to your abode."

Then they placed over Athos a guard of fifty men, who surrounded his house, without losing sight of him for a minute.

The secret remained secure, but hours, but days passed away without the general's returning, or without anything being heard of him.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### SMUGGLING.

Two days after the events we have just related, and whilst every instant General Monk was looked for in the camp to which he did not return, a little Dutch *felucca*, manned by eleven men, cast anchor upon the coast of Scheveningen, nearly within cannon-shot of the port. It was night, the darkness was great, the sea rose in the darkness : it was a capital time to land passengers and merchandise.

The road of Scheveningen forms a vast crescent ; it is not very deep and not very safe ; therefore, nothing is seen stationed there but large Flemish hoys, or some of those Dutch barques which fishermen draw up upon the sand upon rollers, as the ancients did, according to Virgil. When the tide is rising, ascends and advances on the land, it is not prudent to bring the vessels too close in shore, for, if the wind is fresh, the prows are buried in the sand ; and the sand of that coast is spongy ; it receives easily, but does not give up so. It was on this account, no doubt, that a boat was detached from the barque, as soon as the latter had cast anchor, and came with eight sailors, amidst whom was to be seen an object of an oblong form, a sort of large pannier or bale.

The shore was deserted ; the few fishermen inhabiting the *dune* were gone to bed. The only sentinel that guarded the coast (a coast very badly guarded, seeing that a landing from large ships was impossible), without having been able to follow the example of the fishermen, who were gone to bed, imitated them so far, that he slept at the back of his watch-box as soundly as they slept in their beds. The only noise to be heard, then, was the whistling of the night-breeze among the bushes and brambles of the *dune*. But the people who were approaching were doubtless mistrustful people, for this real silence and apparent solitude did not satisfy them. Their boat, therefore, scarcely visible as a dark speck upon the ocean, glided along noiselessly, avoiding the use of their oars for fear of being heard, and gained the nearest land. Scarcely had it touched the ground when a single man jumped out of the boat, after having given a brief order, in a manner which denoted the habit of commanding. In consequence of this order, several muskets immediately glittered in the feeble light reflected from that mirror of the heavens, the sea ; and the oblong bale of which we spoke, containing no doubt some contraband object, was transported to land, with infinite precautions. Immediately after, the man who

had landed first, set off in a hasty pace diagonally towards the village of Scheveningen, directing his course to the nearest point of the wood. When there, he sought for that house already described as the temporary residence—and a very humble residence—of him who was styled by courtesy king of England. All were asleep there, as everywhere else, only a large dog, of the race of those which the fishermen of Scheveningen harness to little carts to carry fish to the Hague, began to bark formidably as soon as the stranger's steps were audible beneath the windows. But this watchfulness, instead of alarming the newly-landed man, appeared, on the contrary, to give him great joy, for his voice might perhaps have proved insufficient to rouse the people of the house, whilst, with an auxiliary of that sort, his voice became almost useless. The stranger waited, then, till these reiterated and sonorous barkings should, according to all probability, have produced their effect, and then he ventured a summons. On hearing his voice, the dog began to roar with such violence that soon another voice was heard from the interior, appeasing that of the dog. With that the dog was quieted.

"What do you want?" asked that voice, at the same time weak broken, and civil.

"I want his majesty King Charles II., king of England," said the stranger.

"What do you want with him?"

"I want to speak to him."

"Who are you?"

"Ah! *mordoux!* you ask too much; I don't like talking through doors."

"Only tell me your name."

"I don't like to declare my name in the open air, neither; besides, you may be sure I shall not eat your dog, and I hope to God he will be as reserved with respect to me."

"You bring news, perhaps, monsieur, do you not?" replied the voice, patient and querulous as that of an old man.

"I will answer for it, I bring you news you little expect. Open the door, then, if you please, *hein!*"

"Monsieur," persisted the old man, "do you believe, upon your soul and conscience, that your news is worth waking the king for?"

"For God's sake, my dear monsieur, draw your bolts; you will not be sorry, I will swear, for the trouble it will give you. I am worth my weight in gold, *parole d'honneur!*"

"Monsieur, I cannot, notwithstanding, open the door till you have told me your name."

"Must I, then?"

"It is by the order o. my master, monsieur."

"Well, my name is—but, I warn you, my name will tell you absolutely nothing."

"Never mind, tell it, notwithstanding."

"Well, I am the Chevalier d'Artagnan."

The voice uttered an exclamation.

"Oh! good heavens!" said the voice on the other side of the door, "Monsieur d'Artagnan! What happiness! I could not help thinking I knew that voice."

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan. "My voice is known here! That's flattering."

"Oh! yes, we know it," said the old man, drawing the bolts; "and here

is the proof." And at these words he let in D'Artagnan, who, by the light of the lantern he carried in his hand, recognised his obstinate interlocutor.

"Ah ! *mordieux* !" cried he ; "why it is Parry ! I ought to have known that."

"Parry, yes, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan, it is I. What joy to see you once again !"

"You are right there, what joy !" said D'Artagnan, pressing the old man's hand. "There, now you'll go and inform the king, will you not ?"

"But the king is asleep, my dear monsieur."

"*Mordieux* ! then wake him. He won't scold you for having disturbed him, I will promise you."

"You come on the part of the comte, do you not ?"

"The Comte de la Fère ?"

"From Athos ?"

"*Ma foi* ! no ; I come on my own part. Come, Parry, quick ! The king—I want the king."

Parry did not think it his duty to resist any longer ; he knew D'Artagnan long before ; he knew that although a Gascon, his words never promised more than they could stand to. He crossed a court and a little garden, appeased the dog, who seemed seriously to wish to taste the musketeer, and went howling to the shelter of a chamber forming the ground-floor of a little pavilion. Immediately a little dog inhabiting that chamber replied to the great dog inhabiting the court.

"Poor king !" said D'Artagnan to himself, "these are his body-guards. It is true he is not the worse guarded on that account."

"What is wanted with me ?" asked the king, from the back of the chamber.

"Sire, it is M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan, who brings you some news."

A noise was immediately heard in the chamber, a door was opened, and a flood of light inundated the corridor and the garden. The king was working by the light of a lamp. Papers were lying about upon his desk, and he had commenced the foul copy of a letter which showed, by the numerous erasures, the trouble he had had in writing it.

"Come in, monsieur le chevalier," said he, turning round. Then perceiving the fisherman, "What do you mean, Parry ? Where is M. le Chevalier d'Artagnan ?" asked Charles.

"He is before you, sire," said M. d'Artagnan.

"What, in that costume ?"

"Yes ; look at me, sire ; do you not remember having seen me at Blois, in the antechambers of king Louis XIV. ?"

"Yes, monsieur, and I remember I was much pleased with you."

D'Artagnan bowed. "It was my duty to conduct myself as I did, the moment I knew that I had the honour of being near your majesty."

"You bring me news, do you say ?"

"Yes, sire."

"From the king of France ?"

"*Ma foi* ! no, sire," replied D'Artagnan. "Your majesty must have seen yonder that the king of France is only occupied with his own majesty?"

Charles raised his eyes towards heaven.

"No, sire, no," continued D'Artagnan. "I bring news entirely composed of personal facts. Nevertheless, I hope your majesty will listen to the facts and news with some favour."

"Speak, monsieur."

"If I am not mistaken, sire, your majesty spoke a great deal at Blois, of the embarrassed state in which the affairs of England are."

Charles coloured. "Monsieur," said he, "it was to the king of France I related——"

"Oh ! your majesty is mistaken," said the musketeer, coolly, "I know how to speak to kings in misfortune. It is only when they are in misfortune that they speak to me ; once fortunate, they look upon me no more. I have, then, for your majesty, not only the greatest respect, but, still more, the most absolute devotion ; and that, believe me, with me, sire, means something. Now, hearing your majesty complain of your destiny, I found that you were noble and generous, and bore misfortune well."

"In truth !" said Charles, much astonished, "I do not know which I ought to prefer, your freedoms or your respects."

"You will choose presently, sire," said D'Artagnan. "Then your majesty complained to your brother, Louis XIV., of the difficulty you experienced in returning to England and regaining your throne, for want of men and money."

Charles allowed a movement of impatience to escape him.

"And the principal object your majesty found in your way," continued D'Artagnan, "was a certain general commanding the armies of the parliament, and who was playing yonder the part of another Cromwell. Did not your majesty say so?"

"Yes ; but I repeat to you, monsieur, those words were for the king's ears alone."

"And you will see, sire, that it is very fortunate that they fell into those of his lieutenant of musketeers. That man so troublesome to your majesty was one General Monk, I believe ; did I not hear his name correctly, sire ?"

"Yes, monsieur ; but once more, to what purpose are all these questions?"

"Oh ! I know very well, sire, that etiquette will not allow kings to be interrogated. I hope, however, presently you will pardon my want of etiquette. Your majesty added that, notwithstanding, if you could see him, confer with him, and meet him face to face, you would triumph, either by force or persuasion, over that obstacle—the only serious one, the only insurmountable one, the only real one you met with on your road."

"All that is true, monsieur ; my destiny, my future, my obscurity, or my glory depend upon that man ; but what do you draw from that ?"

"One thing alone : that if this General Monk is troublesome to the point you describe, it would be expedient to get rid of him, your majesty, or to make an ally of him."

"Monsieur, a king who has neither army nor money, as you have heard my conversation with my brother Louis, has no means of acting against a man like Monk."

"Yes, sire, that was your opinion, I know very well : but, fortunately for you, it was not mine."

"What do you mean by that ?"

"That, without an army and without a million, I have done—, myself—what your majesty thought could alone be done with an army and a million."

"How ! What do you say ? What have you done ?"

"What have I done ? Eh ! well, sire, I went yonder to take this man who is so troublesome to your majesty."

"In England ?"

"Exactly, sire."

"You went to take Monk in England?"

"Should I by chance have done wrong, sire?"

"In truth, you are mad, monsieur!"

"Not the least in the world, sire."

"You have taken Monk?"

"Yes, sire."

"Where?"

"In the midst of his camp."

The king trembled with impatience.

"And having taken him on the causeway of Newcastle, I bring him to your Majesty," said D'Artagnan simply.

"You bring him to me!" cried the king, almost indignant at what he considered a mystification.

"Yes, sire," replied D'Artagnan, in the same tone, "I bring him to you, he is down below yonder, in a large chest pierced with holes, so as to allow him to breathe."

"Good God!"

"Oh! don't be uneasy, sire; we have taken the greatest possible care of him. He comes in good state, and in perfect condition. Would your majesty please to see him, to talk with him, or to have him thrown into the sea?"

"Oh, heavens!" repeated Charles, "oh, heavens! do you speak the truth, monsieur? Are you not insulting me with some unworthy pleasantry? You have accomplished this unheard-of act of audacity and genius—impossible!"

"Will your majesty permit me to open the window?" said D'Artagnan, opening it.

The king had not time to reply, yes or no. D'Artagnan gave a shrill and prolonged whistle, which he repeated three times through the silence of the night.

"There!" said he, "he will be brought to your majesty."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN BEGINS TO FEAR HE HAS PLACED HIS MONEY AND THAT OF PLANCHET IN THE SINKING FUND.

THE king could not overcome his surprise, and looked sometimes at the smiling face of the musketeer, and sometimes at the dark window which opened into the night. But before he had fixed his ideas, eight of D'Artagnan's men, for two had remained to take care of the barque, brought to the house, where Parry received him, that object of an oblong form, which, for the moment, inclosed the destinies of England. Before he left Calais, D'Artagnan had had made in that city a sort of coffin, large and deep enough for a man to turn in it at his ease. The bottom and sides, properly mattressed, formed a bed sufficiently soft to prevent the rolling of the ship turning this kind of cage into a rat-trap. The little grating, on which D'Artagnan had spoken to the king, like the vizor of a helmet, was placed opposite to the man's face. It was so constructed that, at the least cry, a sudden pressure would stifle that cry, and, if necessary, him who had uttered that cry. D'Artagnan was so well acquainted with his crew and his prisoner, that during the whole voyage he had been in dread of two things: either that the general would prefer death to this sort of im-

prisonment, and would smother himself by endeavouring to speak, or that his guards would allow themselves to be tempted by the offers of the prisoner, and put him, D'Artagnan, into the box instead of Monk. D'Artagnan, therefore, had passed the two days and the two nights of the voyage close to the coffin, alone with the general, offering him wine and food, which he had refused, and constantly endeavouring to reassure him upon the destiny which awaited him at the end of this singular captivity. Two pistols on the table and his naked sword made D'Artagnan easy with regard to indiscretions from without. When once at Scheveningen he had felt completely reassured. His men greatly dreaded any conflict with the lords of the soil. He had, besides, interested in his cause him who had morally served him as lieutenant, and whom we have seen reply to the name of Menneville. The latter, not being a vulgar spirit, had more to risk than the others, because he had more conscience. He had faith in a future in the service of D'Artagnan, and consequently would have allowed himself to be cut to pieces, rather than violate the order given by his leader. Thus it was that, once landed, it was to him D'Artagnan had confided the care of the chest and the general's respiration. It was him, too, he had ordered to have the chest brought by the seven men as soon as he should hear the triple whistle. We have seen that the lieutenant obeyed. The coffer once in the house, D'Artagnan dismissed his men with a gracious smile, saying, "Messieurs, you have rendered a great service to King Charles II., who in less than six weeks will be king of England. Your gratification will then be doubled. Return to the boat and wait for me." Upon which they departed with such shouts of joy as terrified even the dog himself.

D'Artagnan had caused the coffer to be brought as far as into the king's antechamber. He then, with great care, closed the door of this antechamber, after which he opened the coffer, and said to the general :

"General, I have a thousand excuses to make to you ; my manner of acting has not been worthy of such a man as you, I know very well ; but I wished you to take me for the captain of a barque. And then England is a very inconvenient country for transports. I hope, therefore, you will take all that into consideration. But now, general, you are at liberty to get up and walk." This said, he cut the bonds which fastened the arms and hands of the general. The latter got up, and then sat down with the countenance of a man who expects death. D'Artagnan opened the door of Charles's cabinet, and said, "Sire, here is your enemy, M. Monk ; I promised myself to perform this service for your majesty. It is done ; now order as you please. M. Monk," added he, turning towards the prisoner, "you are in the presence of his majesty Charles II., sovereign lord of Great Britain."

Monk raised towards the prince his coldly stoical look, and replied : "I know no king of Great Britain ; I recognise even here no one worthy of bearing the name of gentleman : for it is in the name of King Charles II. that an emissary, whom I took for an honest man, has come and laid an infamous snare for me. I have fallen into that snare ; so much the worse for me. Now, you the tempter," said he to the king ; "you the executor," said he to D'Artagnan ; "remember what I am about to say to you : you have my body, you may kill it, and I persuade you to do so, for you shall never have my mind or my will. And now, ask me not a single word, for from this moment I will not open my mouth even to cry out. I have said."

And he pronounced these words with the savage, invincible resolution of the most mortified Puritan. D'Artagnan looked at his prisoner like a man

who knows the value of every word, and who fixes that value according to the accent with which it has been pronounced.

"The fact is," said he, in a whisper to the king, "the general is an obstinate man ; he would not take a mouthful of bread, nor swallow a drop of wine, during the two days of our voyage. But as from this moment it is your majesty who must decide his fate, I wash my hands of him."

Monk, erect, pale, and resigned, waited with his eyes fixed and his arms folded. D'Artagnan turned towards him. "You will please to understand perfectly," said he, "that your speech, otherwise very fine, does not suit anybody, not even yourself. His majesty wished to speak to you, you refused him an interview ; why, now that you are face to face, that you are here by a force independent of your will, why do you confine yourself to rigours which I consider as useless and absurd ? Speak ! what the devil ! speak, if only to say 'No.'"

Monk did not unclothe his lips, Monk did not turn his eyes ; Monk stroked his moustache with a thoughtful air, which announced that matters were going on badly.

During all this time Charles II. had fallen into a profound reverie. For the first time he found himself face to face with Monk ; that is to say, of that man he had so much desired to see ; and, with that peculiar glance which God has given to eagles and kings, he had fathomed the abyss of his heart. He beheld Monk, then, resolved positively to die rather than speak, which was not to be wondered at in so considerable a man, the wound in whose mind must at the moment have been cruel. Charles II. formed, on the instant, one of those resolutions upon which an ordinary man rests his life, a general his fortune, and a king his kingdom. "Monsieur," said he to Monk, "you are perfectly right upon certain points ; I do not, therefore, ask you to answer me, but to listen to me."

There was a moment's silence, during which the king looked at Monk, who remained impassible.

"You have made me just now a painful reproach, monsieur," continued the king ; "you said that one of my emissaries had been to Newcastle to lay a snare for you, and that, parenthetically, cannot be understood by M. d'Artagnan here, and to whom, before everything, I owe sincere thanks for his generous, his heroic devotion."

D'Artagnan bowed with respect ; Monk took no notice.

"For M. d'Artagnan—and observe, M. Monk, I do not say this to excuse myself,—for M. d'Artagnan," continued the king, "has gone into England on his own proper movement, without interest, without orders, without hope, like a true gentleman as he is, to render a service to an unfortunate king, and to add to the illustrious actions of an existence, already so well filled, one fine action more."

D'Artagnan coloured a little, and coughed to keep his countenance. Monk did not stir.

"You do not believe what I tell you, M. Monk," continued the king. "I can understand that,—such proofs of devotion are so rare, that their reality may well be put in doubt."

"Monsieur would do wrong not to believe you, sire," cried D'Artagnan ; "for that which your majesty has said is the exact truth, and the truth so exact that it appears, in going to fetch the general, I have done something which sets everything wrong. In truth, if it be so, I am in despair."

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said the king, pressing the hand of the musketeer, "you have obliged me as much as if you had promoted the success of my cause, for you have revealed to me an unknown friend, to whom I

shall ever be grateful, and whom I shall always love." And the king pressed his hand cordially. "And," continued he, bowing to Monk, "an enemy whom I shall henceforth esteem at his proper value."

The eyes of the Puritan flashed, but only once, and his countenance, for an instant, illumined by that flash, resumed its sombre impassibility.

"Then, Monsieur d'Artagnan," continued Charles, "this is what was about to happen : M. le Comte de la Fère, whom you know, I believe, has set out for Newcastle."

"What, Athos !" exclaimed D'Artagnan.

"Yes, that was his *nom de guerre*, I believe. The Comte de la Fère had then set out for Newcastle, and was going, perhaps, to bring the general to hold a conference with me or with those of my party, when you violently, as it appears, interfered with the negotiation."

"*Mordious !*" replied D'Artagnan, "who entered the camp the very evening in which I succeeded in getting into it with my fishermen——"

An almost imperceptible frown on the brow of Monk told D'Artagnan that he had surmised rightly.

"Yes, yes," muttered he ; "I thought I knew his person ; I even fancied I knew his voice. Unlucky wretch that I am ! Oh ! sire, pardon me ! I thought I had so successfully steered my barque."

"There is nothing ill in it, monsieur," said the king, "except that the general accuses me of having laid a snare for him which is not the case. No, general, those are not the arms which I contemplated employing with you, as you will soon see. In the meanwhile, when I give you my word upon the honour of a gentleman, believe me, monsieur, believe me ! Now, Monsieur d'Artagnan, a word with you, if you please."

"I listen on my knees, sire."

"You are truly at my service, are you not ?"

"Your majesty has seen I am, too much so."

"That is well ; from a man like you one word suffices. In addition to that word you bring actions. General, have the goodness to follow me. Come with us, M. d'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan, considerably surprised, prepared to obey. Charles II. went out, Monk followed him, D'Artagnan followed Monk. Charles took the path by which D'Artagnan had come to his abode ; the fresh sea-breezes soon saluted the faces of the three nocturnal travellers, and, at fifty paces from the little gate which Charles opened, they found themselves upon the *dune* in face of the ocean, which, having ceased to rise, reposed upon the shore like a monster fatigued. Charles II. walked pensively along, his head hanging down and his hand beneath his cloak. Monk followed him, with crossed arms and an uneasy look. D'Artagnan came last, with his hand on the hilt of his sword.

"Where is the boat in which you came, gentlemen ?" said Charles to the musketeer.

"Yonder, sire ; I have seven men and an officer waiting for me in that little barque which is lighted by a fire."

"Yes, I see ; the boat is drawn up upon the sand ; but you certainly did not come from Newcastle in that frail barque ?"

"No, sire ; I freighted a felucca, on my own account, which is at anchor within cannon-shot of the *dunes*. It was in that felucca we made the voyage."

"Monsieur," said the king to Monk, "you are free."

However firm of will, Monk could not suppress an exclamation. The king added an affirmative motion of his head, and continued : "We will

waken a fisherman of the village, who will put his boat to sea immediately, and will take you back to any place you may command him. M. D'Artagnan here will escort your honour. I place M. D'Artagnan under the safe-guard of your loyalty, M. Monk."

Monk allowed a murmur of surprise to escape him, and D'Artagnan a profound sigh. The king, without appearing to notice either, knocked against the deal trellis which inclosed the cabin of the principal fisherman inhabiting the *dune*.

"Hola ! Keyser !" cried he, "awake !"

"Who calls me?" asked the fisherman.

"I, Charles, the king."

"Ah, my lord !" cried Keyser, rising ready dressed from the sail in which he slept, as people sleep in a hammock. "What can I do to serve you?"

"Captain Keyser," said Charles, "you must set sail immediately. Here is a traveller who wishes to freight your barque, and will pay you well ; use him well." And the king drew back a few steps to allow Monk to speak to the fisherman.

"I wish to cross over into England," said Monk, who spoke Dutch enough to make himself understood.

"This minute," said the *patron*, "this very minute, if you wish it."

"But will that be long?" said Monk.

"Not half an hour, your honour. My eldest son is at this moment preparing the boat, as we were going out fishing at three o'clock in the morning."

"Well, is all arranged?" asked the king, drawing near.

"All but the price," said the fisherman ; "yes, sire."

"That is my affair," said Charles, "the gentleman is my friend."

Monk started and looked at Charles, on hearing this word.

"Very well, my lord," replied Keyser. And at that moment they heard Keyser's elder son, signalling from the shore with the blast of a bull's horn.

"Now, gentlemen," said the king, "be gone !"

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "will it please your majesty to grant me a few minutes? I have engaged men, and I am going without them, I must give them notice."

"Whistle to them," said Charles, smiling.

D'Artagnan, accordingly, whistled, whilst the *patron* Keyser replied to his son ; and four men, led by Menneville, attended the first summons.

"Here is some money on account," said D'Artagnan, putting into their hands a purse containing two thousand five hundred livres in gold. "Go and wait for me at Calais, you know where." And D'Artagnan heaved a profound sigh, as he let the purse fall into the hands of Menneville.

"What, are you leaving us?" cried the men.

"For a short time," said D'Artagnan, "or for a long time, who knows? But with 2,500 livres, and the 2,500 you have already received, you are paid according to our agreement. We are quits, then, my friends."

"But the boat?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that."

"Our things are on board the felucca."

"Go and seek them, and afterwards set off immediately."

"Yes, captain."

D'Artagnan returned to Monk, saying—"Monsieur, I await your orders, for I understand we are to go together, unless my company be disagreeable to you."

"On the contrary, monsieur," said Monk.

"Come, gentlemen, on board," said Keyser's son.

Charles bowed to the general with grace and dignity, saying,—“You will pardon me this unfortunate accident, and the violence to which you have been subjected, when you are convinced that I was not the cause of them.”

Monk bowed profoundly without replying. On his side, Charles affected not to say a word to D'Artagnan in private, but aloud,—“Once more, thanks, monsieur le chevalier,” said he, “thanks for your services. They will be repaid you by the Lord God, who, I hope, reserves for me alone trials and troubles.”

Monk followed Keyser, and his son embarked with them. D'Artagnan came after, muttering to himself,—“Poor Planchet ! poor Planchet ! I am very much afraid we have made but a bad speculation.”

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### CHAPTER XXX.

#### THE SHARES OF THE COMPANY OF PLANCHET AND CO. RISE AGAIN TO PAR.

DURING the passage, Monk only spoke to D'Artagnan in cases of urgent necessity. Thus, when the Frenchman hesitated to come and take his repast, a poor repast composed of salt fish, biscuit, and Hollands gin, Monk called him, saying,—“To table, monsieur, to table !” This was all. D'Artagnan, from being himself on all great occasions extremely concise, did not draw from the general's conciseness a favourable augury of the result of his mission. Now, as D'Artagnan had plenty of time for reflection, he battered his brains during this time in endeavouring to find out how Athos had seen King Charles, how he had conspired his departure with him, and lastly, how he had entered Monk's camp; and the poor lieutenant of musketeers plucked a hair from his moustache every time he reflected that the cavalier who accompanied Monk on the night of the famous abduction, must have been Athos. At length, after a passage of two nights and two days, the *patron* Keyser touched the point where Monk, who had given all orders during the voyage, had commanded they should land. It was exactly at the mouth of the little river, near which Athos had chosen his abode. Day was declining, a splendid sun, like a red steel buckler, was plunging the lower extremity of his disc under the blue line of the sea. The felucca was making fair way up the river, tolerably wide in that part, but Monk, in his impatience, desired to be landed, and Keyser's boat placed him and D'Artagnan upon the muddy bank, amidst the reeds. D'Artagnan, resigned to obedience, followed Monk exactly as a chained bear follows his master; but the position humiliated him not a little, and he grumbled to himself that the service of kings was a bitter one, and that the best of them was good for nothing. Monk walked with long and hasty strides; it might be thought that he did not yet feel certain of having regained English land. They had already begun to perceive distinctly a few of the cottages of the sailors and fishermen spread over the little quay of this humble port, when, all at once, D'Artagnan cried out,—“God pardon me, there is a house on fire !”

Monk raised his eyes, and perceived there was, in fact, a house which the flames were beginning to devour. It had begun at a little shed belonging to the house, the roof of which it had seized upon. The fresh evening breeze agitated the fire. The two travellers quickened their steps, hearing

loud cries, and seeing, as they drew nearer, soldiers with their glittering arms pointing towards the house on fire. It was doubtless this menacing occupation which had made them neglect to signalise the felucca. Monk stopped short for an instant, and, for the first time, formulated his thoughts with words. "Eh ! but," said he, "perhaps they are not my soldiers, but Lambert's."

These words contained at once a pain, an apprehension, and a reproach perfectly intelligible to D'Artagnan. In fact, during the general's absence, Lambert might have given battle, conquered, and dispersed the parliament's army, and taken with his own the place of Monk's army, deprived of its strongest support. At this doubt, which passed from the mind of Monk to his own, D'Artagnan made this reasoning :—"One of two things is going to happen ; either Monk has spoken correctly, and there are no longer any but Lambertists in the country—that is to say, enemies who would receive me wonderfully well, since it is to me they owe their victory ; or nothing is changed, and Monk, transported with joy at finding his camp still in the same place, will not prove too severe in his settlement with me." Whilst thinking thus, the two travellers advanced, and began to find themselves engaged in a little knot of sailors, who looked on with sorrow at the burning house, but did not dare to say anything, on account of the menaces of the soldiers. Monk addressed one of these sailors :—"What is going on here ?" asked he.

"Monsieur," replied the man, not recognising Monk as an officer, under the thick cloak which enveloped him, "that house was inhabited by a foreigner, and this foreigner became suspected by the soldiers. Then they wanted to get into his house under the pretence of taking him to the camp ; but he, without being frightened by their numbers, threatened death to the first who should cross the threshold of his door ; and as there was one who did venture, the Frenchman stretched him on the earth with a pistol-shot."

"Ah ! he is a Frenchman is he ?" said D'Artagnan rubbing his hands. "Good !"

"How good ?" replied the fisherman.

"No, I don't mean that.—Next ?—my tongue tripped."

"Next, monsieur ?—why, the other men became as enraged as so many lions ; they fired more than a hundred shots at the house ; but the Frenchman was sheltered by the wall, and every time they tried to enter by the door they met with a shot from his lackey, whose aim is deadly, d'ye see ? Every time they threatened the window, they met with a pistol-shot from the master. Look and count—there are seven men down."

"Ah ! my brave compatriot," cried D'Artagnan, "wait a little—wait a little. I will be with you ; and we will give an account of all this *canaille*."

"One instant, monsieur," said Monk, "wait."

"Long ?"

"No ; only the time to ask a question." Then, turning towards the sailor, "My friend," asked he, with an emotion which, in spite of all his self-command, he could not conceal, "Whose soldiers are these, pray tell me ?"

"Whose should they be but that madman, Monk's ?"

"There has been no battle, then ?"

"A battle, yes ! but what good ? Lambert's army is melting away like snow in April. All come to Monk, officers and soldiers. In a week Lambert won't have fifty men left."

The fisherman was interrupted by a fresh salvo of musketry discharged

against the house, and by another pistol-shot which replied to the salvo, and struck down the most daring of the aggressors. The rage of the soldiers was at its height. The fire still continued to increase, and a crest of flame and smoke whirled and spread over the roof of the house. D'Artagnan could no longer contain himself. "*Mordieux!*" said he to Monk, glancing at him sideways; "are you a general, and allow your men to burn houses—assassinate people, while you look on and warm your hands at the blaze of the conflagration? *Mordieux!* you are not a

man." "Patience, monsieur, patience!" said Monk, smiling.

"Patience! yes, until that brave gentleman is roasted—is that what you mean?" And D'Artagnan rushed forward.

"Remain where you are, monsieur," said Monk, in a tone of command. And he advanced towards the house, just as an officer had approached it, saying to the besieged: "The house is burning, you will be grilled within an hour! There is still time—come, tell us what you know of General Monk, and we will spare your life. Reply, or by St. Patrick——"

The besieged made no answer; he was no doubt reloading his pistol.

"A reinforcement is gone for," continued the officer; "in a quarter of an hour there will be a hundred men round your house."

"I reply to you," said the Frenchman. "Let your men be sent away: I will come out freely and repair to the camp alone, or else I will be killed here!"

"*Mille tonnerres!*" shouted D'Artagnan; "why that's the voice of Athos! *Ah, canailles!*" and the sword of D'Artagnan flamed from its sheath. Monk stopped him, and advanced himself, exclaiming, in a sonorous voice: "Hola! what is going on here? Digby, whence is this fire? why these cries?"

"The general!" cried Digby, letting the point of his sword fall.

"The general!" repeated the soldiers.

"Well, what is there so astonishing in that?" said Monk, in a calm tone. Then, silence being re-established—"Now," said he, "who lit this fire?"

The soldiers hung down their heads.

"What! do I ask a question, and nobody answers me?" said Monk.

"What! do I find a fault, and nobody repairs it? The fire is still burning, I believe."

Immediately the twenty men rushed forward, seizing pails, buckets, and barrels, and extinguishing the fire with as much ardour as they had instant before, employed in promoting it. But already, and without rest, D'Artagnan had applied a ladder to the house, crying: "Up with me, I, D'Artagnan! Do not kill me, my dearest friend!" And the comte was clasped in his arms.

In the meantime, Grimaud, preserving his calm air, directed the evacuation of the ground-floor, and after having opened the door, with his arms crossed, quietly on the sill. Only, at hearing the name of D'Artagnan, he had uttered an exclamation of surprise. Then, astonished, the soldiers presented themselves, Digby at the head.

"General," said he, "excuse us; what we have done is for your honour, whom we thought lost."

"You are mad, gentlemen. Lost! Is a man lost? Is a man lost, not, by chance, to be permitted to be absent, without giving formal notice? Do you, by chance, permit a man to go from the city? Is a gentleman, my friend, not permitted to go out, trapped, and threatened with death because he is not a

fies that word, suspected? Curse me if I don't have even one of you shot that the brave gentleman has left alive!"

"General," said Digby, piteously, "there were twenty-eight of us, and see, there are eight on the ground."

"I authorise M. le Comte de la Fère to send the two to join the eight," said Monk, stretching out his hand to Athos. "Let them return to camp. Monsieur Digby, you will consider yourself under arrest during a month."

"General——"

"That is to teach you, monsieur, not to act, another time, without orders."

"I had these of the lieutenant, general."

"The lieutenant has no such orders to give you, and he shall be placed under arrest, instead of you, if he has really commanded you to burn this gentleman."

"He did not command that, general; he commanded us to bring him to the camp; but the comte was not willing to follow us."

"I was not willing that they should enter and plunder my house," said Athos to Monk, with a significant look.

"And you were quite right. To the camp, I say." The soldiers departed with dejected looks. "Now we are alone," said Monk to Athos, "have the goodness to tell me, monsieur, why you persisted in remaining here, whilst you had your felucca——"

"I waited for you, general," said Athos. "Had not your honour appointed me a meeting in a week?"

An eloquent look from D'Artagnan made it clear to Monk that these two, so brave and so loyal, had not acted in concert for his abduction. He already it could not be so.

"Monsieur," said he to D'Artagnan, "you were perfectly right. Have the goodness to allow me a moment's conversation with M. le Comte de la Fère."

D'Artagnan took advantage of this to go and ask Grimaud how he did. He requested Athos to conduct him to the chamber he lived in.

The chamber was still full of smoke and rubbish. More than fifty balls had passed through the windows, and mutilated the walls. They found a table, a stand, and materials for writing. Monk took up a pen, wrote a letter, signed it, folded the paper, sealed the letter with the seal of his pocket, and passed over the missive to Athos, saying, "Monsieur, carry, if you please, this letter to King Charles II., and set out immediately, if you can. Do you see you are no longer here any longer."

"Do you see you are no longer here any longer?" said Athos.

"The man who brought me hither will assist you in transporting me. Be gone, if possible, within an hour."

"I am gone," said Athos.

"D'Artagnan!" cried Monk from the window. D'Artagnan turned back. "Embrace your friend and bid him adieu, monsieur; and then go to Holland."

"I will," said D'Artagnan; "and I?"

"You must follow him, monsieur; but I request you to do so."

"Will you refuse me?"

"I am at your orders."

Athos, and only had time to bid him adieu.

Then he took upon himself the preparations for the departure of the casks on board, and the embarkation of D'Artagnan by the arm, who was quite amazed and

agitated, he led him towards Newcastle. Whilst going along, the general leaning on his arm, D'Artagnan could not help murmuring to himself,—“Come, come, it seems to me that the shares of the house of Planchet and company are rising.”

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## MONK REVEALS HIMSELF.

D'ARTAGNAN, although he flattered himself with better success, had, nevertheless, not too well comprehended his situation. It was a strange and grave subject for him to reflect upon—this voyage of Athos into England ; this league of the king with Athos, and that extraordinary combination of his design with that of the Comte de la Fère. The best way was to let things follow their own train. An imprudence had been committed, and, whilst having succeeded as he had promised, D'Artagnan found that he had gained no advantage by his success. Since everything was lost, he could risk no more. D'Artagnan followed Monk through his camp. The return of the general had produced a marvellous effect, for his people had thought him lost. But Monk, with his austere look and icy demeanour, appeared to ask of his eager lieutenants and delighted soldiers the cause of all this joy. Therefore to the lieutenants who had come to meet him, and who expressed the uneasiness with which they had learnt his departure,—

“Why is all this?” said he ; “am I obliged to render an account of myself to you?”

“But, your honour, the sheep may well tremble without the shepherd.”

“Tremble !” replied Monk, with his calm and powerful voice ; “ah, monsieur, what a word ! Curse me, if my sheep have not both teeth and claws, I renounce being their shepherd. Ah ! you tremble, gentlemen, do you ?”

“Yes, general, for you.”

“Oh ! pray meddle with your own concerns. If I have not the wit God gave to Oliver Cromwell, I have that which He has sent to me : I am satisfied with it, however little it may be.”

The officer made no reply ; and Monk, having imposed silence on his people, all remained persuaded that he had accomplished some important work, or made some important trial. This was forming a very poor conception of his patient and scrupulous genius. Monk, if he had the good faith of the puritans, his allies, must have returned thanks with much fervour to the patron saint who had taken him from the box of M. d'Artagnan. Whilst these things were going on, our musketeer could not help constantly repeating,—“God grant that M. Monk may not have as much self-love as I have ; for I declare if any one had put me into a coffer with that grating over my mouth, and carried me so packed up, like a calf, across the seas, I should retain such an ill remembrance of my pious looks in that coffer, and such an ugly animosity against him who had inclosed me in it, I should dread so greatly to see a sarcastic smile blooming upon the face of the malicious wretch, or in his attitude any grotesque imitation of my position in the box, that, *Mordioux !* I should plunge a good poniard into his throat in compensation of the grating, and would nail him down in a veritable bier, in remembrance of the false coffin in which I had been left to grow mouldy for two days.” And D'Artagnan spoke honestly when he spoke thus ; for the skin of our Gascon was a very thin one. Monk, fortu-

ately, entertained other ideas. He never opened his mouth concerning the past to his timid conqueror; but he admitted him very near to his person in his labours, took him with him to several *reconnaissances*, in such a way as to obtain that which he evidently warmly desired,—a rehabilitation in the mind of D'Artagnan. The latter conducted himself like a passed master in the art of flattery: he admired all Monk's tactics, and the ordering of his camp; he joked very pleasantly upon the circumvallations of the camp of Lambert, who had, he said, very uselessly given himself the trouble to inclose a camp for twenty thousand men, whilst an acre of ground would have been quite sufficient for the corporal and fifty guards who would perhaps remain faithful to him. Monk, immediately after his arrival, had accepted the proposition made by Lambert the evening before, for an interview, and which Monk's lieutenants had refused, under the pretext that the general was indisposed. This interview was neither long nor interesting: Lambert demanded a profession of faith of his rival. The latter declared he had no other opinion but that of the majority. Lambert asked if it would not be more expedient to terminate the quarrel by an alliance than by a battle. Monk thereupon required a week for consideration. Now, Lambert could not refuse this; and Lambert, nevertheless, had come saying, that he should devour the army of Monk. Therefore, at the end of the interview, which Lambert's party watched with impatience, nothing was decided—neither treaty nor battle—the rebel army, as M. d'Artagnan had foreseen, began to prefer the good cause to the bad one, and the parliament, *rumpish* as it was, to the pompous nothings of the designs of Lambert. They remembered, likewise, the good repasts of London—the profusion of ale and sherry with which the citizens of London paid their friends the soldiers;—they looked with terror at the black war bread, at the troubled waters of the Tweed,—too salt for the glass, not enough so for the pot; and they said to themselves, “Are not the roast meats kept warm for Monk in London?” From that time nothing was heard of but desertion in Lambert's army. The soldiers allowed themselves to be drawn away by the force of principles, which are, like discipline, the obligatory tie in everybody constituted for any purpose. Monk defended the parliament,—Lambert attacked it. Monk had no more inclination to support the parliament than Lambert had, but he had it inscribed upon his standards, so that all those of the contrary party were reduced to write upon theirs, “Rebellion,” which sounded ill in puritan ears. They flocked then from Lambert to Monk, as sinners flock from Baal to God.

Monk made his calculations: at a thousand desertions a day Lambert had men enough to last twenty days; but there is in things which sink such a growth of increase and swiftness, which combine with each other, that a hundred left the first day, five hundred the second, a thousand the third. Monk thought he had obtained his rate. But from a thousand the desertion passed quickly on to two thousand, then to four thousand, and, a week after, Lambert perceiving that he had no longer the possibility of accepting battle, if it were offered to him, took the wise resolution of decamping during the night, to return to London, and be beforehand with Monk, in constructing a power with the wreck of the military party. But Monk, free and without inquietude, marched towards London as a conqueror, augmenting his army from all the floating parties on his passage. He encamped at Barnet, that is to say, within four leagues of the capital, cherished by the parliament, which thought it beheld in him a protector, and looked for by the people, who were anxious to see him reveal himself

that they might judge him. D'Artagnan himself had not been able to fathom his tactics: he observed—he admired. Monk could not enter London with a settled determination without renouncing civil war. He temporised for a short time. Suddenly, without anybody expecting it, Monk drove the military party out of London, and installed himself in the city amidst the citizens, by order of the parliament; then, at the moment when the citizens were crying out against Monk—at the moment when the soldiers themselves were accusing their leader—Monk, finding himself certain of a majority, declared to the Rump that it must abdicate—be dissolved—and yield its place to a government which would not be a joke. Monk pronounced this declaration, supported by fifty thousand swords, to which, that same evening, were united, with hurrahs of delirious joy, the five hundred thousand inhabitants of the good city of London. At length, at the moment when the people, after their triumphs and festive repasts in the open streets, were looking about for a master, it was affirmed that a vessel had left the Hague, bearing Charles II. and his fortunes.

"Gentlemen," said Monk to his officers, "I am going to meet the legitimate king. He who loves me will follow me." A burst of acclamations welcomed these words, which D'Artagnan did not hear without the greatest delight.

"*Mordieux!*" said he to Monk, "that is bold, monsieur."

"You will accompany me, will you not?" said Monk.

"*Pardieu!* general. But tell me, I beg, what you wrote by Athos, that is to say, the Comte de la Fère—you know—the day of our arrival?"

"I have no secrets for you now," replied Monk. "I wrote these words: 'Sire, I expect your majesty in six weeks at Dover.'"

"Ah!" said D'Artagnan, "I no longer say it is bold; I say it is well played: it is a fine stroke!"

"You are something of a judge in such matters," replied Monk.

And this was the only time the general had ever made an allusion to his voyage to Holland.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

ATHOS AND D'ARTAGNAN MEET ONCE MORE AT THE HOSTELRY OF THE  
"CORNE DU CERF."

THE king of England made his *entrée* into Dover with great pomp, as he afterwards did into London. He had sent for his brothers; he had brought over his mother and sister. England had been for so long a time given up to herself—that is to say, to tyranny, mediocrity and nonsense, that this return of Charles II., whom the English only knew as the son of the man whose head they had cut off, was a festival for the three kingdoms. Consequently, all the vows, all the acclamations, which accompanied his return, struck the young king so forcibly, that he stooped towards the ear of James of York, his younger brother, and said, "In truth, James, it appears to have been our own fault that we were so long absent from a country where we are so much beloved!" The *cortège* was magnificent. Beautiful weather favoured the solemnity. Charles had regained all his youth, all his good humour; he appeared to be transfigured; hearts seemed to smile beneath him like the sun. Amongst this obstreperous crowd of courtiers and worshippers, who did not appear to remember they had conducted to the scaffold at Whitehall the father of the new king, a man, in the garb of a lieutenant of musketeers, looked, with a smile

upon his thin, intellectual lips, sometimes at the people vociferating their benedictions, and sometimes at the prince who pretended emotion, and who bowed most particularly to the women, whose *bouquets* were strewed before his horse's feet. "What a fine trade is that of a king!" said this man, drawn away by his contemplation, and so completely absorbed, that he stopped in the middle of his road, leaving the *cortège* to file past. "Now, there is, in good truth, a prince all stitched over with gold and diamonds, enamelled with flowers like a spring meadow; he is about to plunge his empty hands into the immense coffer in which his now faithful—but so lately unfaithful—subjects have amassed one or two cart-loads of ingots of gold. They cast *bouquets* enough upon him to smother him; and yet, if he had presented himself to them two months ago, they would have sent as many bullets and balls at him as they now throw flowers. Decidedly it is worth something to be born in a certain fashion; with submission to the lowly, who pretend that it is of very little advantage to them to be born lowly." The *cortège* continued to file on, and, with the king, the acclamations began to die away in the direction of the palace, which, however, did not prevent our officer from being shoved about.

"*Mordoux!*" continued the reasoner, "these people tread upon my toes and look upon me as of very little consequence, or rather of none at all, seeing that they are Englishmen and I am a Frenchman. If all these people were asked—'Who is M. d'Artagnan?' they would reply, '*Nescio vos.*' But let anyone say to them, 'There is the king going by,' 'There is M. Monk going by,' they would run away, shouting—'*Vive le roi! Vive M. Monk!*' till their lungs were exhausted. And yet," continued he, surveying, with that look sometimes so keen and sometimes so proud, the diminishing crowd—"and yet, reflect a little, my good people, on what your king has done, on what M. Monk has done, and then think what has been done by this poor unknown, who is called M. d'Artagnan! It is true you do not know him, since he is here unknown, which prevents your thinking about the matter. But, bah! what matters it! All that does not prevent Charles II. from being a great king, although he has been exiled twelve years, or M. Monk from being a great captain, although he did make a voyage to Holland in a box. Well, then, since it is admitted that one is a great king and the other a great captain—'*Hurrah for King Charles II.!*—*Hurrah for General Monk!*'" And his voice mingled with the voices of the hundreds of spectators, over which it dominated for a moment. Then, the better to play the devoted man, he took off his hat and waved it in the air. Some one seized his arm in the very height of his expansive loyalism. (In 1660 that was so termed which we now call royalism.)

"Athos!" cried D'Artagnan, "you here!" And the two friends seized each other's hands.

"You here!—and being here," continued the musketeer, "you are not in the midst of all those courtiers, my dear comte! What! you, the hero of the *fête*, you are not prancing on the left hand of the king, as M. Monk is prancing on the right? In truth, I cannot comprehend your character, nor that of the prince who owes you so much!"

"Still a railer! my dear D'Artagnan!" said Athos. "Will you never correct yourself of that vile habit?"

"But, you do not form part of the *cortège*?"

"I do not, because I was not willing to do so."

"And why were you not willing?"

"Because I am neither envoy nor ambassador, nor representative of

the king of France ; and it does not become me to exhibit myself thus near the person of another king than the one God has given me for a master."

"*Mordieux!* you came very near to the person of the king, his father."

"That was another thing, my friend ; he was about to die."

"And yet that which you did for him ——"

"I did because it was my duty to do it. But you know I hate all ostentation. Let King Charles II. then, who no longer stands in need of me, leave me to my repose, and in the shade, that is all I claim of him."

D'Artagnan sighed.

"What is the matter with you?" said Athos. "One would say that this happy return of the king to London saddens you, my friend ; you who have done at least as much for his majesty as I have."

"Have I not," replied D'Artagnan, with his Gascon laugh, "have I not done much for his majesty, without anyone suspecting it?"

"Yes, yes, but the king is well aware of it, my friend," cried Athos.

"He is aware of it!" said the musketeer bitterly, "by my faith ! I did not suspect so, and I was even, a moment ago, trying to forget it myself."

"But he, my friend, will not forget it, I will answer for him."

"You tell me that to console me a little, Athos."

"For what?"

"*Mordieux!* for the loss of all the expenses I have been at. I have ruined myself, my friend, ruined myself for the restoration of this young prince who has just passed, capering upon his *isabelle* coloured horse."

"The king does not know you have ruined yourself, my friend ; but he knows he owes you much."

"And say, Athos, does that advance me in any respect ; for to do you justice, you have laboured nobly. But I, I, who in appearance marred your combinations, it was I who really made them succeed. Follow my calculations closely ; you might not have, by persuasions or mildness, convinced General Monk, whilst I have so roughly treated this dear general, that I furnished your prince with an opportunity of showing himself generous : this generosity was inspired in him by the fact of my fortunate mistake, and Charles is paid by the restoration which Monk has brought about."

"All that, my dear friend, is strikingly true," replied Athos.

"Well, strikingly true as it may be, it is not less true, my friend, that I shall return—greatly noticed by M. Monk, who calls me *dear captain* all day long, although I am neither dear to him nor a captain ;—and strongly appreciated by the king, who has already forgotten my name ;—it is not less true, I say, that I shall return to my beautiful country, cursed by the soldiers I had raised with the hopes of large pay, cursed by the brave Planchet, of whom I borrowed a part of his fortune."

"How is that ? What the devil had Planchet to do in all this ?"

"Ay, yes, my friend ; but this king, so spruce, so smiling, so adored, M. Monk fancies he has recalled him, you fancy you have supported him, I fancy I have brought him back, the people fancy they have re-conquered him, he himself fancies he has negotiated so as to be restored ;—and yet, nothing of all this is true, for Charles II., king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, has been replaced upon the throne by a French grocer, who lives in the Rue des Lombards, and is named Planchet.—And such is grandeur ! Vanity ! says the Scripture, vanity, all is vanity."

Athos could not help laughing at this whimsical outbreak of his friend.

"My dear D'Artagnan," said he, pressing his hand affectionately, "should you not exercise a little more philosophy? Is it not some further satisfaction to you to have saved my life as you did by arriving so fortunately with Monk, when those damned parliamentarians wanted to burn me alive?"

"Well, but you, in some degree, deserved burning a little, my friend."

"How so! What, for having saved King Charles's million?"

"What million?"

"Ah, that is true! you never knew that, my friend; but you must not be angry, for it was not my secret. That word REMEMBER which the king pronounced upon the scaffold."

"And which means *souviens-toi*!"

"Exactly. That was signified. Remember there is a million buried in the vaults of Newcastle Abbey, and that that million belongs to my son."

"Ah! very well, I understand. But what I understand likewise, and what is very frightful, is, that every time his majesty Charles II. will think of me, he will say to himself: 'There is the man who was near making me lose my crown. Fortunately I was generous, great, full of presence of mind.' This is what will say the young gentleman in a shabby black *pourpoint*, who came to the château of Blois, hat in hand, to ask me if I would grant him access to the king of France."

"D'Artagnan! D'Artagnan!" said Athos, laying his hand on the shoulder of the musketeer, "you are unjust."

"I have a right to be so."

"No—for you are ignorant of the future."

D'Artagnan looked his friend full in the face, and began to laugh. "In truth, my dear Athos," said he, "you have some words so superb, that they only belong to you and M. le Cardinal Mazarin."

Athos frowned slightly.

"I beg your pardon," continued D'Artagnan, laughing, "I beg your pardon, if I have offended you. The future! *Nein*! what pretty words are words that promise, and how well they fill the mouth in default of other things! *Mordious*! After having met with so many who promised, when have I found one who performed? But, let that pass!" continued D'Artagnan. "What are you doing here, my dear Athos? Are you king's treasurer?"

"How—why king's treasurer?"

"Well; since the king possesses a million, he must want a treasurer. The king of France, although he is not worth a sou, has still an intendant of finance, M. Fouquet. It is true, that, in exchange, M. Fouquet, they say, has a good number of millions of his own."

"Oh! our million is spent, long ago," said Athos, laughing in his turn.

"I understand; it was frittered away in satin, precious stones, velvet, and feathers of all sorts and colours. All these princes and princesses stood in great need of tailors and dressmakers. Eh! Athos, do you remember what we fellows expended in equipping ourselves for the campaign of La Rochelle, and to make our appearance on horseback? Two or three thousand livres, by my faith! But a king's robe is more ample, it would require a million to purchase the stuff. At least, Athos, if you are not treasurer, you are on a good footing at court."

"By the faith of a gentleman, I know nothing about it," said Athos, simply.

"What! you know nothing about it?"

"No! I have not seen the king since we left Dover."

"Then he has forgotten you, too! *Mordieux!* That is shameful!"

"His majesty has had so much business to transact."

"Oh!" cried D'Artagnan, with one of those intelligent grimaces which he alone knew how to make, "that is enough to make me recover my love for Monseigneur Giulio Mazarini. What, Athos! the king has not seen you since?"—"No."

"And you are not furious?"

"I!—why should I be? Do you imagine, my dear D'Artagnan, that it was on the king's account I acted as I have done? I did not know the young man. I defended the father, who represented a principle—sacred in my eyes, and I allowed myself to be drawn towards the son, by a sympathy for this same principle. Besides, he was a worthy knight, a noble mortal creature, that father; do you remember him?"

"Yes; that is true; he was a brave, an excellent man, who led a sad life, but made a fine end."

"Well; my dear D'Artagnan, understand this: to that king, to that man of heart, to that friend of my thoughts, if I durst venture to say so, I swore, at the last hour, to preserve faithfully the secret of a deposit which was to be transmitted to his son, to assist him at his need. This young man came to me; he described his destitution; he was ignorant that he was anything for me, but a lively remembrance of his father. I have accomplished towards Charles II. what I promised Charles I.: that is all. Of what consequence is it to me, then, whether he be grateful, or not! It is to myself I have rendered a service, by relieving myself of this responsibility, and not to him."

"Well, I have always said," replied D'Artagnan, with a sigh, "that disinterestedness was the finest thing in the world."

"Well, and you, my friend," resumed Athos, "are you not in the same situation as myself? If I have properly understood your words, you have allowed yourself to be affected by the misfortunes of this young man; that, on your part, was much greater than it was upon mine, for I had a duty to fulfil; whilst you were under no obligation to the son of the martyr. You had not, on your part, to pay him the price of that precious drop of blood which he let fall upon my brow, through the floor of his scaffold. That which made you act was heart alone—the noble and good heart which you possess beneath your apparent scepticism and sarcastic irony; you have engaged the fortune of a servant, and your own, I suspect, my benevolent miser! and your sacrifice is not acknowledged! Of what consequence is it? You wish to repay Planchet his money. I can comprehend that, my friend; for it is not becoming in a gentleman to borrow of his inferior, without returning him principal and interest. Well, I will sell La Fère, if necessary, and if not, some little farm. You shall pay Planchet, and there will be enough, believe me, of corn left in my granaries for us two and Raoul. In this way, my friend, you will owe an obligation to nobody but yourself; and, if I know you well, it will not be a small satisfaction to your mind, to be able to say 'I have made a king!' Am I right?"

"Athos! Athos!" murmured D'Artagnan, thoughtfully, "I have told you more than once, that the day on which you shall preach, I will attend the sermon; the day on which you shall tell me there is a hell, *mordieux!* I shall be afraid of the gridiron and the forks. You are better than I, or rather, better than anybody, and I only acknowledge the possession of one merit, and that is, of not being jealous. Except that defect, damme, as the English say, if I have not all the rest."

"I know nobody equal to D'Artagnan," replied Athos; "but here we are, arrived gently at the house I inhabit. Will you come in, my friend?"

"Eh! why this is the tavern of the 'Corne du Cerf,' I think?" said D'Artagnan.

"I confess I chose it on purpose. I like old acquaintances; I like to sit down on that place, whereon I sank, overcome by fatigue, overwhelmed with despair, when you returned on the 31st of January."

"After having discovered the abode of the masked executioner? Yes, that was a terrible day!"

"Come in, then," said Athos, interrupting him.

They entered the large apartment, formerly the common one. The tavern, in general, and this room in particular, had undergone great changes; the ancient host of the musketeers having become tolerably rich for an innkeeper, had closed his shop, and made of this room, of which we were speaking, an *entrepôt* for colonial provisions. As for the rest of the house, he let it ready furnished to strangers. It was with unspeakable emotion D'Artagnan recognised all the furniture of the chamber of the first story; the wainscoting, the tapestries, and even that geographical chart which Porthos had so fondly studied in his moments of leisure.

"It is eleven years ago," cried D'Artagnan. "*Mordioux!* it appears to me a century!"

"And to me but a day," said Athos. "Imagine the joy I experience, my friend, in seeing you there, in pressing your hand, in casting from me sword and poniard, and tasting without mistrust this glass of sherry. And, oh! what still further joy it would be, if our two friends were there, at the two angles of the table, and Raoul, my beloved Raoul, in the threshold, looking at us with his large eyes, at once so brilliant and so soft!"

"Yes, yes," said D'Artagnan, much affected, "that is true. I approve particularly of the first part of your thought; it is very pleasant to smile there where we have so legitimately shuddered at thinking that from one moment to another M. Mordaunt might appear upon the landing."

At this moment the door opened, and D'Artagnan, brave as he was, could not restrain a slight movement of fright. Athos understood him, and smiling,—

"It is our host," said he, "bringing me a letter."

"Yes, my lord," said the good man; "here is a letter for your honour."

"Thank you," said Athos, taking the letter without looking at it. "Tell me, my dear host, if you do not remember this gentleman?"

The old man raised his head, and looked attentively at D'Artagnan.

"No," said he.

"It is," said Athos, "one of those friends of whom I have spoken to you, and who lodged here with me eleven years ago."

"Oh! but," said the old man, "so many strangers have lodged here!"

"But we lodged here on the 30th of January, 1649," added Athos, believing he would stimulate the lazy memory of the host by this remark.

"That is very possible," replied he, smiling; "but it is so long ago!" and he bowed, and went out.

"Thank you," said D'Artagnan—"perform exploits, accomplish revolutions, endeavour to engrave your name in stone or upon brass with strong swords! there is something more rebellious, more hard, more forgetful than iron, brass, or stone, and that is, the brain become old of the letter of lodgings enriched by his trade;—he does not know me! Well, I should have known him, though."

Athos, smiling at his friend's philosophy, unsealed his letter.

"Ah !" said he, "a letter from Parry."

"Oh ! oh !" said D'Artagnan, "read it, my friend, read it ! it, no doubt, contains news."

Athos shook his head, and read :

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE.—The king has experienced much regret at not seeing you to-day, near him, at his entrance. His majesty commands me to say so, and to recall him to your memory. His majesty will expect you this evening, at the palace of St. James's, between nine and ten o'clock.

"I am, with respect, Monsieur le Comte, your honour's very humble and very obedient servant,—PARRY."

"You see, my dear D'Artagnan," said Athos, "we must not despair of the hearts of kings."

"Not despair ! you have reason to say so !" replied D'Artagnan.

"Oh ! my dear, very dear friend," resumed Athos, whom the almost imperceptible bitterness of D'Artagnan had not escaped. "Pardon me ! can I have unintentionally wounded my best comrade ?"

"You are mad, Athos, and to prove it I will conduct you to the palace ; to the very gate, I mean ; the walk will do me good."

"You will go in with me, my friend, I will speak to his majesty."

"No, no !" replied D'Artagnan, with a true pride, free from all mixture ; "if there is anything worse than begging yourself, it is making others beg for you. Come, let us go, my friend, the walk will be charming ; I will, in passing, show you the house of M. Monk, who has detained me with him. A beautiful house, by my faith. Being a general in England is better than being a *maréchal* in France, please to know."

Athos allowed himself to be led along, made quite sad by D'Artagnan's forced attempts at gaiety. The whole city was in a state of joy ; the two friends were jostled at every moment by enthusiasts who required them, in their intoxication, to cry out, "Long live good King Charles !" D'Artagnan replied by a grunt, and Athos by a smile. They arrived thus in front of Monk's house, before which, as we have said, they had to pass on their way to St. James's. Athos and D'Artagnan said but little on their route, for the simple reason that they would have had so many things to talk about if they had spoken. Athos thought that by speaking he should evince satisfaction, and that that might wound D'Artagnan. The latter feared that in speaking he should allow some little acerbity to steal into his words which would render his company unpleasant to his friend. It was a singular emulation of silence between contentment and ill-humour. D'Artagnan gave way first to that itching at the tip of his tongue which he so habitually experienced.

"Do you remember, Athos," said he, "the passage of the 'Memoires de D'Aubigny,' in which that devoted servant, a Gascon like myself, poor as myself, and, I was going to add, brave as myself, relates instances of the meanness of Henry IV. ? My father always told me, I remember, that D'Aubigny was a liar. But, nevertheless, examine how all the princes, the issue of the great Henry, keep up the character of the race."

"Nonsense !" said Athos, "the kings of France misers ? You are mad, my friend."

"Oh ! you are so perfect yourself, you never agree to the faults of others. But, in reality, Henry IV. was covetous, Louis XIII., his son, was so likewise ; we know something of that, don't we ? Gaston carried this vice to exaggeration, and has made himself, in this respect, hated by all

who surround him. Henriette, poor woman, might well be avaricious, she who did not eat every day, and could not warm herself every winter ; and that is an example she has given to her son Charles II., grandson of the great Henry IV., who is as covetous as his mother and his grandfather. See if I have well traced the genealogy of the misers ?”

“D’Artagnan, my friend,” cried Athos, “you are very rude towards that eagle race called the Bourbons.”

“Eh ! and I have forgotten the best instance of all—the other grandson of the Béarnais, Louis XIV., my ex-master. Well, I hope he is miserly enough, who would not lend a million to his brother Charles ! Good ! I see you are beginning to be angry. Here we are, by good luck, close to my house, or rather to that of my friend, M. Monk.”

“My dear D’Artagnan, you do not make me angry, you make me sad ; it is cruel, in fact, to see a man of your merit out of the position his services ought to have acquired ; it appears to me, my dear friend, that your name is as radiant as the greatest names in war and diplomacy. Tell me if the Luynes, the Bellegardes, and the Bassompierres have merited, as we have, fortunes and honours ? You are right, my friend, a hundred times right.”

D’Artagnan sighed, and preceding his friend under the porch of the mansion Monk inhabited, at the extremity of the city, “Permit me,” said he, “to leave my purse at home ; for if in the crowd those clever pick-pockets of London, who are much boasted of, even in Paris, were to steal from me the remainder of my poor crowns, I should not be able to return to France. Now, content I left France, and wild with joy I should return to it, seeing that all my prejudices of former days against England are returned, accompanied by many others.”

Athos made no reply.

“So then, my dear friend, one second, and I will follow you,” said D’Artagnan. “I know you are in a hurry to go yonder to receive your reward, but, believe me, I am not less eager to partake of your joy, although at a distance. Wait for me.” And D’Artagnan was already passing through the vestibule, when a man, half servant, half soldier, who filled in Monk’s establishment the double functions of porter and guard, stopped our musketeer, saying to him, in English :

“I beg your pardon, my Lord D’Artagnan !”

“Well,” replied the latter ; “what is it ? Is the general going to dismiss me ? I only wanted to be expelled by him.”

These words, spoken in French, made no impression upon the person to whom they were addressed, and who himself only spoke an English mixed with the rudest Scotch. But Athos was grieved with them, for he began to think D’Artagnan was not wrong.

The Englishman showed D’Artagnan a letter : “From the general,” said he.

“Aye ! that’s it, my dismissal !” replied the Gascon. “Must it be read, Athos ?”

“You must be deceived,” said Athos, “or I know no more honest people in the world but you and myself.”

D’Artagnan shrugged his shoulders and unsealed the letter, whilst the impassible Englishman held for him a large lantern, by the light of which he was enabled to read it.

“Well, what have you ?” said Athos, seeing the countenance of the reader change.

“Read it yourself,” said the musketeer.

Athos took the paper and read :—

“MONSIEUR D'ARTAGNAN,—The king very much regrets you did not come to St. Paul's with his *cortège*. You have failed with him as you failed with me, my dear captain. There is but one means of repairing all this. His majesty expects me at nine o'clock at the palace of St. James's ; will you be there at the same time with me ? His gracious majesty appoints that hour for an audience he grants you.”

This letter was from Monk.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE AUDIENCE.

“WELL ?” cried Athos, with a mild look of reproach, when D'Artagnan had read the letter addressed to him by Monk.

“Well !” said D'Artagnan, red with pleasure, and a little with shame.

“To be in such a hurry to accuse the king and Monk was a politeness,—which leads to nothing, it is true, but yet it is a politeness.”

“I had great difficulty in believing the young prince ungrateful,” said Athos.

“The fact is, that his present is still too near to his past,” replied D'Artagnan ; “but, after all, everything to the present moment proves me right.”

“I acknowledge it, my dear friend, I acknowledge it. Ah ! there is your cheerful look returned. You cannot think how delighted I am.”

“Thus you see,” said D'Artagnan, “Charles II. receives M. Monk at nine o'clock ; me he will receive at ten ; it is a grand audience, of the sort which at the Louvre are called ‘distributions of holy court water.’ Come, let us go and place ourselves under the spout, my dear friend ! come along.”

Athos replied nothing ; and both directed their steps, at a quick pace, towards the palace of St. James's, which the crowd still surrounded, to catch, through the windows, the shadows of the courtiers, and the reflection of the royal person. Eight o'clock was striking, when the two friends took their places in the gallery filled with courtiers and politicians. Every one gave a glance at these simply-dressed men in foreign habits, at these two noble heads so full of character and meaning. On their side, Athos and D'Artagnan, having with two looks taken the measure of the whole of the assembly, resumed their chat. A great noise was suddenly heard at the extremity of the gallery,—it was General Monk, who entered, followed by more than twenty officers, all anxious for one of his smiles, for he had been the evening before master of all England, and a glorious morrow was looked for for the restorer of the family of the Stuarts.

“Gentlemen,” said Monk, turning round, “henceforward I beg you to remember that I am no longer anything. Lately I commanded the principal army of the republic ; now that army is the king's, into whose hands I am about to replace, at his command, my power of yesterday.”

Great surprise was painted on the countenances of all, and the circle of adulators and supplicants which surrounded Monk an instant before, was enlarged by degrees, and finished by being lost in the large undulations of the crowd. Monk was going into the antechamber as others did. D'Artagnan could not help remarking this to the Comte de la Fère, who frowned on beholding it. Suddenly the door of the royal closet opened

and the young king appeared, preceded by two officers of his household."

"Good evening, gentlemen," said he. "Is General Monk here?"

"I am here, sire," replied the old general.

Charles stepped hastily towards him, and seized his hand with the warmest demonstration of friendship. "General," said the king, aloud, "I have just signed your patent,—you are Duke of Albemarle; and my intention is that no one shall equal you in power and fortune in this kingdom, where—the noble Montrose excepted—no one has equalled you in loyalty, courage, and talent. Gentlemen, the duke is commander of our armies by land and by sea, pay him your respects, if you please, in that character."

Whilst every one was pressing round the general, who received all this homage without losing his impassibility for an instant, D'Artagnan said to Athos: "When one thinks that this duchy, this command of the land and sea forces, all these grandeurs, in a word, have been shut up in a box six feet long and three feet wide!—"

"My friend," replied Athos, "much more imposing grandeurs are confined to boxes still smaller,—and remain there for ever."

All at once, Monk perceived the two gentlemen, who held themselves apart until the crowd had diminished; he made himself a passage towards them, so that he surprised them in the midst of their philosophical reflections. "Were you speaking of me?" said he, with a smile.

"My lord," replied Athos, "we were speaking likewise of God."

Monk reflected for a moment, and then replied gaily: "Gentlemen, let us speak a little of the king likewise, if you please; for you have, I believe, an audience of his majesty."

"At nine o'clock," said Athos.

"At ten o'clock," said D'Artagnan.

"Let us go into this closet at once," replied Monk, making a sign to his two companions to precede him; but to which neither would consent.

The king during this so French debate, had returned to the centre of the gallery.

"Oh! my Frenchmen!" said he, in that tone of careless gaiety which, in spite of so much grief and so many crosses, he had never lost. "My Frenchmen! my consolation!" Athos and D'Artagnan bowed.

"Duke, conduct these gentlemen into my study. I am at your service, messieurs," added he in French. And he promptly expedited his court, to return to his Frenchmen, as he called them. "Monsieur d'Artagnan," said he, as he entered his closet, "I am glad to see you again."

"Sire, my joy is at its height at having the honour to salute your majesty in your own palace of St. James's."

"Monsieur, you have been willing to render me a great service, and I owe you my gratitude for it. If I did not fear to intrude upon the rights of our general commandant, I would offer you some post worthy of you near our person."

"Sire," replied D'Artagnan, "I have quitted the service of the king of France, making my prince a promise not to serve any other king."

"Humph!" said Charles, "I am sorry to hear that; I should like to do much for you; you please me greatly."—"Sire——"

"But, let us see," said Charles, with a smile, "if we cannot make you break your word. Duke, assist me. If you were offered, that is to say, if I offered you the chief command of my musketeers?" D'Artagnan bowed lower than before.

"I should have the regret to refuse what your gracious majesty would offer me," said he ; "a gentleman has but his word, and that word, as I have had the honour to tell your majesty, is engaged to the king of France."

"We will say no more about it, then," said the king, turning towards Athos, and leaving D'Artagnan plunged in the deepest pangs of disappointment.

"Ah ! I said so !" muttered the musketeer. "Words ! words ! Court holy water ! Kings have always a marvellous talent for offering us that which they know we will not accept, and in appearing generous without risk. So be it !—triple fool that I was to have hoped for a moment !"

During this time, Charles took the hand of Athos. "Comte," said he, "you have been to me a second father ; the services you have rendered me are above all price. I have thought of a recompense, notwithstanding. You were created by my father a Knight of the Garter—that is an order which all the kings of Europe cannot bear ; by the queen regent, Knight of the Holy Ghost—which is an order not less illustrious ; I join to it that of the Golden Fleece, which the king of France has sent me, to whom the king of Spain, his father-in-law, gave two on the occasion of his marriage ; but, in return, I have a service to ask of you."

"Sire," said Athos, with confusion, "the Golden Fleece for me ! when the king of France is the only person in my country who enjoys that distinction ?"

"I wish you to be in your country and elsewhere the equal of all those whom sovereigns have honoured with their favour," said Charles, drawing the chain from his neck ; "and I am sure, comte, my father smiles on me from the depths of his tomb."

"It is unaccountably strange," said D'Artagnan to himself, whilst his friend, on his knees, received the eminent order which the king conferred on him—"It is almost incredible that I have always seen showers of prosperity fall upon all who surrounded me, and that not a drop ever reached me ! If I were a jealous man, it would be enough to make one tear one's hair, *parole d'honneur !*"

Athos rose from his knees, and Charles embraced him tenderly, "General !" said he to Monk—then stopping with a smile, "Pardon me, duke I mean. No wonder if I mistake ; the word duke is too short for me, I always seek for some title to elongate it. I should wish to see you so near my throne, that I might say to you, as to Louis XIV., my brother ! Oh ! I have it ; and you will be almost my brother, for I make you viceroy of Ireland and Scotland, *my dear duke*. So, after that fashion, henceforward I shall not make a mistake."

The duke seized the hand of the king, but without enthusiasm, without joy, as he did everything. His heart, however, had been moved by this last favour. Charles, by skilfully husbanding his generosity, had left the duke time to wish, although he might not have wished for so much as was given him.

"*Mordoux !*" grumbled D'Artagnan, "there is the shower beginning again ! Oh ! it is enough to turn one's brain !" and he turned away with an air so sorrowful and so comically piteous, that the king, who caught it, could not restrain a smile. Monk was preparing to leave the closet to take leave of Charles.

"What ! my trusty and well-beloved !" said the king to the duke, "are you going ?"

"If it please your majesty, for in truth I am tired. The emotions of the day have worn me out : I stand in need of repose."

"But," said the king, "you are not going without M. d'Artagnan, I hope."

"Why not, sire?" said the old warrior.

"Well! you know very well why," said the king.

Monk looked at Charles with astonishment.

"Oh! it may be possible; but if you forget, you, M. d'Artagnan, do not."

Astonishment was painted on the face of the musketeer.

"Well, then, duke," said the king, "Do you not lodge with M. d'Artagnan?"

"I have the honour to offer M. d'Artagnan a lodging; yes, sire."

"That idea is your own, and yours solely?"

"Mine and mine only, yes, sire."

"Well! but it could not be otherwise—the prisoner is always at the home of his conqueror."

Monk coloured in his turn. "Ah! that is true," said he; "I am M. d'Artagnan's prisoner."

"Without doubt, duke, since you are not yet ransomed; but take no heed of that; it was I who took you out of M. d'Artagnan's hands, and it is I who will pay your ransom."

The eyes of D'Artagnan regained their gaiety and their brilliancy. The Gascon began to comprehend. Charles advanced towards him.

"The general," said he, "is not rich, and cannot pay you what he is worth. I am richer, certainly; but now that he is a duke, and if not a king, almost a king, he is worth a sum I could not perhaps pay. Come, M. d'Artagnan, be moderate with me: how much do I owe you?"

D'Artagnan, delighted at the turn things were taking, but not for a moment losing his self possession, replied,—“Sire, your majesty has no occasion to be alarmed. When I had the good fortune to take his grace, M. Monk was only a general; it is therefore only a general's ransom that is due to me. But if the general will have the kindness to deliver me his sword, I shall consider myself paid; for there is nothing in the world but the general's sword which is worth so much as himself.”

"Odds fish! as my father said," cried Charles. "That is a gallant proposal, and a gallant man, is he not, duke?"

"Upon my honour, yes, sire," and he drew his sword. "Monsieur," said he to D'Artagnan, "here is what you demand. Many may have handled a better blade; but however modest mine may be, I have never surrendered it to any one."

D'Artagnan received with pride the sword which had just made a king.

"Oh! oh!" cried Charles II.; "what! a sword that has restored me to my throne—to go out of the kingdom—and not, one day, to figure among the crown jewels! No, on my soul! that shall not be! Captain d'Artagnan, I will give you two hundred thousand livres for your sword! if that is too little, say so."

"It is too little, sire," replied D'Artagnan, with inimitable seriousness.

"In the first place, I do not at all wish to sell it; but your majesty desires me to do so, and that is an order. I obey, then; but the respect I owe to the illustrious warrior who hears me, commands me to estimate at a third more the reward of my victory. I ask then three hundred thousand livres for the sword, or I will give it to your majesty for nothing." And taking it by the point he presented it to the king. Charles broke into hilarious laughter.

"A gallant man, and a joyous companion! Odds fish! is he not, duke?"

is he not, comte? He pleases me! I like him! Here, Chevalier d'Artagnan, take this." And going to the table, he took a pen and wrote an order upon his treasurer for three hundred thousand livres.

D'Artagnan took it, and turning gravely towards Monk. "I have still asked too little, I know," said he, "but believe me, monsieur le duc, I would rather have died than allow myself to be governed by avarice."

The king began to laugh again, like the happiest cockney of his kingdom.

"You will come and see me again before you go, chevalier?" said he, "I shall want to lay in a stock of gaiety now my Frenchmen are leaving me."

"Ah! sire, it shall not be with the gaiety as with the duke's sword; I will give it to your majesty gratis," replied D'Artagnan, whose feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground.

"And you, comte," added Charles, turning towards Athos, "come again, also; I have an important message to confide to you. Your hand, duke." Monk pressed the hand of the king.

"Adieu! gentlemen," said Charles, holding out each of his hands to the two Frenchmen, who carried them to their lips.

"Well," said Athos, when they were out of the palace, "are you satisfied?"

"Hush?" said D'Artagnan, wild with joy, "I am not yet returned from the treasurer's—the spout may fall upon my head."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### OF THE EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES.

D'ARTAGNAN lost no time, and as soon as the thing was suitable and opportune, he paid a visit to the lord-treasurer of his majesty. He had then the satisfaction to exchange a piece of paper, covered with very ugly writing, for a prodigious number of crowns, recently stamped with the *effigies* of his very gracious majesty Charles II. D'Artagnan easily recovered his self-possession: and yet, upon this occasion, he could not help evincing a joy which the reader will perhaps comprehend, if he deigns to have some indulgence for a man who, since his birth, had never seen so many pieces and rouleaux of pieces juxta-placed in an order truly agreeable to the eye. The treasurer placed all these rouleaux in bags, and closed each bag with a stamp of the arms of England, a favour which treasurers do not accord to everybody. Then, impassible, and just as polite as he ought to be towards a man honoured with the friendship of the king, he said to D'Artagnan:

"Take away your money, sir." *Your money!* These words made a thousand chords vibrate in the heart of D'Artagnan, which he had never felt before. He had the bags packed in a small cart, and returned home meditating profoundly. A man who possesses three hundred thousand livres can no longer expect to wear a smooth brow; a wrinkle for every hundred thousand livres is not too much. D'Artagnan shut himself up, ate no dinner, closed his door against everybody, and, with a lighted lamp, and a loaded pistol on the table, he watched all night, ruminating upon the means of preventing these lovely crowns, which from the coffers of the king had passed into his coffers, from passing from his coffers into the pockets of any thief whatever. The best means discovered by the Gascon was to enclose his treasure, for the present, under locks so solid that no

wrist could break them, and so complicated that no master-key could open them. D'Artagnan remembered that the English are passed masters in mechanics and conservative industry ; and he determined to go in the morning in search of a mechanic who would sell him a strong box. He did not go far, the sieur Will Jobson, dwelling in Piccadilly, listened to his propositions, comprehended his wishes, and promised to make him a safety-lock that should relieve him from all future fear.

"I will give you," said he, "a piece of mechanism entirely new. At the first serious attempt upon your lock, an invisible plate will open of itself and vomit forth a pretty copper bullet of the weight of a mark—which will knock down the intruder, and not without a loud report. What do you think of it?"

"I think it very ingenious," cried D'Artagnan ; "the little copper bullet pleases me mightily. So now, monsieur the mechanic, the terms?"

"A fortnight for the execution, and fifteen hundred livres, payable on delivery," replied the artizan.

D'Artagnan's brow darkened. A fortnight was delay enough to allow the thieves of London time to remove all occasion for the strong box. As to the fifteen hundred livres—that would be paying too dear for what a little vigilance would procure him for nothing.

"I will think of it," said he ; "thank you, monsieur." And he returned home at full speed ; nobody had yet touched his treasure. That same day, Athos paid his friend a visit, and found him so thoughtful that he could not help expressing his surprise.

"How is this?" said he, "you are rich and not gay—you, who were so anxious for wealth!"

"My friend, the pleasures to which we are not accustomed oppress us more than the griefs we are familiar with. Give me your opinion, if you please. I can ask you, who have always had money : when we have money, what do we do with it?"—"That depends."

"What have you done with yours, seeing that it has not made you a miser or a prodigal? For avarice dries up the heart, and prodigality drowns it—is not that so?"

"Fabricius could not have spoken more justly. But, in truth, my money has never been a burden to me."

"How so? Do you place it out at interest?"

"No ; you know I have a tolerably handsome house ; and that house composes the better part of my property."

"I know it does."

"So that you can be as rich as I am, and, indeed, more rich, whenever you like, by the same means."

"But your rents,—do you lay them by?"—"No."

"What do you think of a chest concealed in a wall?"

"I never made use of such a thing."

"Then you must have some confidant, some safe man of business, who pays you interest at a fair rate."

"Not at all."

"Good heavens ! what do you do with it, then?"

"I spend all I have, and I only have what I spend, my dear D'Artagnan."

"Ah ! that may be. But you are something of a prince ; fifteen or sixteen thousand livres melt away between your fingers ; and then you have expenses and appearances——"

"Well, I don't see why you should be less of a noble than I am, my friend ; your money would be quite sufficient."

"Three hundred thousand livres ! Two-thirds too much !"

"I beg your pardon—did you not tell me ?—I thought I heard you say—I fancied you had a partner——"

"Ah ! *Mordoux* ! that's true," cried D'Artagnan, colouring, "there is Planchet. I had forgotten Planchet, upon my life ! Well ! there are my hundred thousand crowns broken into. That's a pity ! it was a round sum, and sounded well.—That is true, Athos ; I am no longer rich. What a memory you have !"

"Tolerably good ; yes, thank God !"

"Bravo, Planchet !" grumbled D'Artagnan ; "he has not had a bad dream ! What a speculation ! *Peste* ! Well ! what is said is said !"

"How much are you to give him ?"

"Oh !" said D'Artagnan, "he is not a bad fellow ; I shall arrange matters with him. I have had a great deal of trouble, you see, and expenses ; all that must be taken into account."

"My dear friend, I can depend upon you, and have no fear for the worthy Planchet ; his interests are better in your hands than in his own. But now that you have nothing more to do here, we will be gone, if you please. You can go and thank his majesty, ask if he has any commands, and in six days, we may be able to get sight of the towers of Notre Dame."

"My friend, I am most anxious to be off, and will go at once and pay my respects to the king."

"I," said Athos, "am going to call upon some friends in the city, and shall be then at your service."

"Will you lend me Grimaud !"

"With all my heart. What do you want to do with him ?"

"Something very simple, and which will not fatigue him ; I will only beg him to take charge of my pistols, which lie there on the table near that coffer."

"Very well !" replied Athos, imperturbably.

"And he will not stir, will he ?"

"Not more than the pistols themselves."

"Then I will go and take leave of his majesty. *Au revoir* !"

D'Artagnan arrived at St. James's, where Charles II., who was busy writing, kept him in the antechamber a full hour. Whilst walking about in the gallery, from the door to the window, from the window to the door, he thought he saw a cloak like Athos' cross the vestibule ; but at the moment he was going to ascertain if it were he, the usher summoned him to his majesty's presence. Charles II. rubbed his hands at receiving the thanks of our friend.

"Chevalier," said he, "you are wrong in expressing gratitude to me ; I have not paid you a quarter of the value of the history of the box into which you put the brave general—the excellent Duke of Ablemarle, I mean." And the king laughed heartily.

D'Artagnan did not think it proper to interrupt his majesty, and bowed with much modesty.

"*Apropos*," continued Charles, "do you think my dear Monk has really pardoned you ?"

"Pardoned me ! yes, I hope so, sire !"

"Eh !—but it was a cruel trick ! Odds fish ! to pack up the first personage of the English revolution like a herring. In your place, I would not trust him, chevalier."

"But, sire——"

"Yes, I know very well that Monk calls you his friend. But he has too

penetrating an eye not to have a memory, and too lofty a brow not to be very proud, you know, *grande supercilium*."

"I certainly will learn Latin," said D'Artagnan to himself.

"But stop," cried the merry monarch, "I must manage your reconciliation; I know how to set about it; so——"

D'Artagnan bit his moustache. "Will your majesty permit me to tell you the truth?"

"Speak, chevalier, speak."

"Well, sire, you alarm me greatly. If your majesty undertakes the affair, as you seem inclined to do, I am a lost man; the duke will have me assassinated."

The king burst into a fresh roar of laughter, which changed D'Artagnan's alarm into downright terror.

"Sire, I beg you to allow me to settle this matter myself, and if your majesty has no further need of my services——"

"No, chevalier. What, do you want to leave us?" replied Charles, with an hilarity that grew more and more alarming.

"If your majesty has no more commands for me."

Charles became more serious.

"One single thing. See my sister, the lady Henrietta. Do you know her?"

"No, sire, but—an old soldier like me, is not an agreeable spectacle for a young and gay princess."

"Ay! but my sister must know you; she must, at her need, have you to depend upon."

"Sire, every one that is dear to your majesty will be sacred to me."

"Very well!—Parry! Come here, Parry."

The lateral door opened, and Parry entered, his face beaming with pleasure as soon as he saw D'Artagnan.

"What is Rochester doing?" said the king.

"He is upon the canal with the ladies," replied Parry.

"And Buckingham?"

"He is there also."

"That is well. You will conduct the chevalier to Villiers; that is, the Duke of Buckingham, chevalier; and beg the duke to introduce M. d'Artagnan to the princess Henrietta."

Parry bowed and smiled to D'Artagnan.

"Chevalier," continued the king, "this is your parting audience, you can afterwards set out as soon as you please."

"Sire, I thank you."

"But be sure you make your peace with Monk!"

"Oh, sire——"

"You know there is one of my vessels at your disposal?"

"Sire, you overpower me, I cannot think of putting your majesty's officers to inconvenience on my account."

The king slapped D'Artagnan upon the shoulder.

"Nobody will be inconvenienced on your account, chevalier, but for that of an ambassador I am about sending to France, and to whom you will serve willingly as a companion, I fancy, for you know him."

D'Artagnan appeared astonished.

"He is a certain Comte de la Fère,—he you call Athos," added the king; terminating the conversation, as he had begun it, by a joyous burst of laughter. "Adieu, chevalier, adieu. Love me as I love you." And thereupon, making a sign to Parry to ask if there were any one waiting for

him in the adjoining closet, the king disappeared into that closet, leaving the place to the chevalier, perfectly astonished with this singular audience. The old man took his arm in a friendly way, and led him towards the garden.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## UPON THE CANAL.

UPON the canal of waters of an opaque green, bordered with marble, upon which time had already scattered black spots and tufts of mossy grass, there glided majestically a long flat barque, *pavoisée* with the arms of England, surmounted by a dais, and carpeted with long damasked stuffs, which trailed their fringes in the water. Eight rowers, leaning lazily to their oars, made it move upon the canal with the graceful slowness of the swans, which, disturbed in their ancient possessions by the approach of the barque, looked from a distance at this splendid and noisy pageant. We say noisy—for the barque contained four players upon the guitar and the lute, two singers, and several courtiers, all sparkling with gold and precious stones, and showing their white teeth in emulation of each other, to please the lady Henrietta Stuart, grand-daughter of Henry IV., daughter of Charles I., and sister of Charles II., who occupied the seat of honour under the dais of the barque. We know this young princess, we have seen her at the Louvre with her mother, wanting wood, wanting bread, and fed by the *coadjuteur* and the parliament. She had, therefore, like her brothers, passed through a troublous youth; then, all at once, she had just awakened from a long and horrible dream, seated on the steps of a throne, surrounded by courtiers and flatterers. Like Mary Stuart on leaving prison, she aspired not only for life and liberty, but for power and wealth.

The lady Henrietta, in growing, had attained remarkable beauty, which the recent restoration had rendered celebrated. Misfortune had taken from her the lustre of pride, but prosperity had restored it to her. She was resplendent, then, in her joy and her happiness,—like those hot-house flowers which, forgotten during a night of the first frosts of autumn, have hung their heads, but which on the morrow, warmed once more by the atmosphere in which they were born, rise again with greater splendour than ever. Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, son of him who played so conspicuous a part in the early chapters of this history,—Villiers of Buckingham, a handsome cavalier, melancholy with women, a jester with men,—and Wilmot, lord Rochester, a jester with both sexes, were standing at this moment before the lady Henrietta, disputing the privilege of making her smile. As to that young and beautiful princess, reclining upon a cushion of velvet bordered with gold, her hands hanging listlessly so as to dip in the water, she listened carelessly to the musicians without hearing them, and heard the two courtiers without appearing to listen to them. This lady Henrietta—this charming creature—this woman who joined the graces of France to the beauties of England, not having yet loved, was cruel in her coquetry. The smile, then,—that innocent favour of young girls—did not even enlighten her countenance; and if, at times, she did raise her eyes, it was to fasten them upon one or other of the cavaliers with such a fixity, that their gallantry, bold as it generally was, took the alarm, and became timid.

In the meanwhile the boat continued its course, the musicians made a great noise, and the courtiers began, like them, to be out of breath. Be-

sides, the excursion became doubtless monotonous to the princess, for, all at once, shaking her head with an air of impatience—"Come, gentlemen,—enough of this ;—let us land."

"Ah, madam," said Buckingham, "we are very unfortunate ! We have not succeeded in making the excursion agreeable to your royal highness."

"My mother expects me," replied the princess ; "and I must frankly admit, gentlemen, I am *ennuyée*." And whilst uttering this cruel word, Henrietta endeavoured to console by a look each of the young men, who appeared terrified at such frankness. The look produced its effect—the two faces brightened ; but immediately, as if the royal coquette thought she had done too much for simple mortals, she made a movement, turned her back to both her adorers, and appeared plunged in a reverie in which it was evident they had no part.

Buckingham bit his lips with anger, for he was truly in love with the lady Henrietta, and, in that case, took everything in a serious light. Rochester bit his lips likewise ; but as his wit always dominated over heart, it was purely and simply to repress a malicious smile. The prince was then allowing the eyes she turned from the young nobles to wander over the green and flowery turf of the park, when she perceived Parry at, D'Artagnan at a distance.

"Who is coming yonder?" said she.

The two young men turned round with the rapidity of lightning.

"Parry," replied Buckingham ; "nobody but Parry."

"I beg your pardon," said Rochester, "but I think he has a companion."

"Yes," said the princess, at first with languor, but then—"What mean those words, 'Nobody but Parry ;' say, my lord?"

"Because, madam," replied Buckingham, piqued, "because the faithful Parry, the wandering Parry, the eternal Parry, is not, I believe, of much consequence."

"You are mistaken, duke. Parry—the wandering Parry, as you call him—has always wandered for the service of my family, and the sight of that old man always gives me satisfaction."

The lady Henrietta followed the usual progress of pretty women, particularly coquettish women : she passed from caprice to contradiction ;—the gallant had undergone the caprice, the courtier must bend beneath the contradictory humour. Buckingham bowed, but made no reply.

"It is true, madam," said Rochester, bowing in his turn, "that Parry is the model of servants ; but, madam, he is no longer young, and we only laugh at seeing cheerful objects. Is an old man a gay object?"

"Enough, my lord," said the princess, coolly ; "the subject of conversation is unpleasant to me."

Then, as if speaking to herself, "It is really unaccountable," said she, "how little regard my brother's friends have for his servants."

"Ah, madam," cried Buckingham, "your royal highness pierces my heart with a poniard forged by your own hands."

"What is the meaning of that speech, which is turned so like a French madrigal, duke ? I do not understand it."

"It means, madam, that you yourself, so good, so charming, so sensible, you have laughed sometimes—smiled, I should say—at the idle prattle of that good Parry, for whom your royal highness to day entertains such a marvellous susceptibility."

"Well, my lord, if I have forgotten myself so far," said Henrietta, "you do wrong to remind me of it." And she made a sign of impatience. "The

good Parry wants to speak to me, I believe : please to order them to row to the shore, my Lord Rochester."

Rochester hastened to repeat the princess's command ; and, a moment after, the boat touched the bank.

"Let us land, gentlemen," said Henrietta, taking the arm which Rochester offered to her, although Buckingham was nearer to her, and had presented his. Then Rochester, with an ill-dissembled pride, which pierced the heart of the unhappy Buckingham through and through, led the princess across the little bridge which the rowers had cast from the royal boat to the shore.

"Which way will your royal highness go?" asked Rochester.

"You see, my lord, towards that good Parry, who is wandering, as my lord of Buckingham says, and seeking me with eyes weakened by the tears he has shed over our misfortunes."

"Good heavens !" said Rochester, "how sad your royal highness is to-day ; we have, in truth, the air of appearing ridiculous fools to you, madam."

"Speak for yourself, my lord," interrupted Buckingham, with vexation ; "for my part, I displease her royal highness to such a degree, that I appear absolutely nothing to her."

Neither Rochester nor the princess made any reply ; Henrietta only urged her cavalier to a quicker pace. Buckingham remained behind, and took advantage of this isolation to give himself up to such rage, in his pocketkerchief, that the cambric was bitten in holes.

"Parry, my good Parry," said the princess, with her weak voice, "come hither. I see you are seeking for me, and I am waiting for you."

"Ah, madam," said Rochester, coming charitably to the succour of his companion, remaining, as we have said, behind, "if Parry cannot see your royal highness, the man who follows him is a sufficient guide, even for a blind man ; for he has eyes of flame. That man is a double-lamped lantern."

"Lighting a very handsome martial countenance," said the princess, determined to be as ill-natured as possible. Rochester bowed. "One of those vigorous soldiers' heads seen nowhere but in France," added the princess, with the perseverance of a woman sure of impunity.

Rochester and Buckingham looked at each other, as much as to say, "What can be the matter with her?"

"See, my lord of Buckingham, what Parry wants," said Henrietta, "go !"

The young man, who considered this order as a favour, resumed his courage, and hastened to meet Parry, who, followed by D'Artagnan, advanced slowly on account of his age. D'Artagnan walked slowly but nobly, as D'Artagnan, doubled by the third of a million, ought to walk, that is to say, without conceit or swagger, but without timidity. When Buckingham, who had been very eager to comply with the desire of the princess, had stopped at a marble bench, as if fatigued with the few steps he had gone,—when Buckingham, we say, was at a distance of only a few paces from Parry, the latter recognised him.

"Ah ! my lord," cried he, quite out of breath, "will your grace obey the king?"

"In what, Monsieur Parry?" said the young man, with a kind of coolness tempered by a desire of making himself agreeable to the princess.

"Well, his majesty begs your grace to present this gentleman to her royal highness the princess Henrietta."

"In the first place, what is the gentleman's name?" said the duke, haughtily.

D'Artagnan, as we know, was easily affronted ; the tone of the duke of Buckingham displeased him. He surveyed the courtier from head to foot, and two flashes beamed from beneath his bent brows. But, after a struggle, "Monsieur le chevalier d'Artagnan, my lord," replied he, quietly.

"Pardon me, monsieur, that name teaches me your name, but nothing more."

"That is to say?"—"That is to say, I do not know you."

"I am more fortunate than you, monsieur," replied D'Artagnan ; "for I have had the honour of knowing much of your family, and particularly my lord duke of Buckingham your illustrious father."

"My father?" said Buckingham. "Well, I think I now remember. Monsieur le chevalier d'Artagnan, do you say?"

D'Artagnan bowed. "In person," said he.

"Pardon me ; but are you one of those Frenchmen who had secret relations with my father?"

"Exactly, monsieur the duke, I am one of those Frenchmen."

"Then, monsieur, permit me to say that it was strange my father never heard of you during his lifetime."

"No, monsieur, but he heard of me at the moment of his death : it was I who sent to him, by the hands of the *valet de chambre* of Anne of Austria, notice of the dangers which threatened him ; unfortunately, it came too late."

"Never mind, monsieur," said Buckingham. "I understand now, that having had the intention of rendering a service to the father, you are come to claim the protection of the son."

"In the first place, my lord," replied D'Artagnan, phlegmatically, "I claim the protection of no man. His majesty Charles II., to whom I have had the honour of rendering some services—I may tell you, my lord, my life has been passed in such occupations—King Charles II., then, who wishes to honour me with some kindness, has desired I shall be presented to her royal highness the princess Henrietta, his sister, to whom I shall, perhaps, have the good fortune to be of service hereafter. Now, the king knew that you, at this moment, were with her royal highness, and has sent me to you, by the intermission of Parry. There is no other mystery. I ask absolutely nothing of you ; and if you will not present me to her royal highness, I shall be compelled to do without you, and present myself."

"At least, monsieur," said Buckingham, determined to have the last word, "you will not go back from an explanation provoked by yourself."

"I never go back, monsieur," said D'Artagnan.

"As you have had relations with my father, you must be acquainted with some private details?"

"These relations are already far removed from us, my lord—for you were not then born—and for some unfortunate diamond studs, which I received from his hands and carried back to France, it is really not worth while awakening so many remembrances."

"Ah ! monsieur," said Buckingham, warmly, going up to D'Artagnan, and holding out his hand to him, "it is you, then—you whom my father sought for so earnestly, and who had a right to expect so much from us."

"To expect, monsieur ; in truth, that is my *forte* ; all my life I have expected."

At this moment, the princess, who was tired of not seeing the stranger approach her, arose and came towards them.

"At least, monsieur," said Buckingham, "you shall not wait for the presentation you claim of me."

Then turning towards the princess, and bowing : "Madam," said the

young man, "the king your brother desires me to have the honour of presenting to your royal highness, Monsieur le chevalier d'Artagnan."

"In order that your royal highness may have, at your need, a firm support and a sure friend," added Parry. D'Artagnan bowed.

"You have still something to say, Parry," replied Henrietta, smiling upon D'Artagnan, while addressing the old servant.

"Yes, madam; the king desires you to preserve religiously in your memory the name, and to remember the merit, of M. d'Artagnan, to whom his majesty owes, he says, the recovery of his kingdom." Buckingham, the princess, and Rochester looked at each other.

"That," said D'Artagnan, "is another little secret, of which, in all probability, I shall not boast to his majesty's son, as I have done to you with respect to the diamond studs."

"Madam," said Buckingham, "monsieur has just, for the second time, recalled to my memory an event which excites my curiosity to such a degree, that I will venture to ask your permission to take him on one side for a moment, to converse in private."

"Do, my lord," said the princess; "but restore to the sister, as quickly as possible, this friend so devoted to the brother." And she took the arm of Rochester, whilst Buckingham took that of D'Artagnan.

"Oh! tell me, chevalier," said Buckingham, "all that affair of the diamonds, which nobody knows in England, not even the son of him who was the hero of it."

"My lord, one person alone had a right to relate all that affair, as you call it, and that was your father; he thought proper to be silent, I must beg you to allow me to be so likewise." And D'Artagnan bowed like a man upon whom it was evident no entreaties could prevail.

"Since it is so, monsieur," said Buckingham, "pardon my indiscretion, I beg you; and, if at any time, I should go into France——" and he turned round to take a last look at the princess, who took but little notice of him, totally occupied as she was, or appeared to be with Rochester. Buckingham sighed.

"Well?" said D'Artagnan.

"I was saying that if, any day, I were to go into France——"

"You will go, my lord," said D'Artagnan, "I will answer for that."

"And how so?"

"Oh, I have strange powers of prediction; if I do predict anything, I am seldom mistaken. If, then, you do come to France?"

"Well, then, monsieur, you, of whom kings ask that valuable friendship, which restores crowns to them, I will venture to beg of you a little of that great interest you avowed for my father."

"My lord," replied D'Artagnan, "believe me, I shall deem myself highly honoured if, in France, you remember having seen me here. And now permit——"

Then, turning towards the princess: "Madame," said he, "your royal highness is a daughter of France; and in that quality I hope to see you again in Paris. One of my happy days will be that on which your royal highness shall give me any command whatever, which will assure me that you have not forgotten the recommendations of your august brother." And he bowed respectfully to the young princess, who gave him her hand to kiss with a right royal grace.

"Ah! madam," said Buckingham, in a subdued voice, "what can a man do to obtain a similar favour from your royal highness?"

"*Dame!* my lord," replied Henrietta, "ask Monsieur d'Artagnan; he will tell you."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN DREW, AS A FAIRY WOULD HAVE DONE, A COUNTRY-SEAT FROM A DEAL BOX.

THE king's words regarding the wounded pride of Monk had not inspired D'Artagnan with a small portion of apprehension. The lieutenant had had, all his life, the great art of choosing his enemies ; and when he had found them implacable and invincible, it was when he had not been able, under any pretence, to make them otherwise. But points of view change greatly in the course of a life. It is a magic lantern, of which the eye of man every year changes the aspects. It results that from the last day of a year on which we saw white, to the first day of the year on which we shall see black, there is but the interval of a single night.

Now D'Artagnan, when he left Calais with his ten scamps, would have hesitated as little in attacking a Goliath, a Nebuchadnezzar, or a Holofernes, as he would in crossing swords with a recruit or cavilling with a landlady. Then he resembled the sparrow-hawk, which, fasting, attacks a ram. Hunger blinds. But D'Artagnan satisfied—D'Artagnan rich—D'Artagnan a conqueror—D'Artagnan proud of so difficult a triumph—D'Artagnan had too much to lose not to reckon, figure by figure, with probable bad fortune. His thoughts were employed, therefore, all the way on the road from his presentation, with one thing, and that was, how he should manage a man like Monk, a man whom Charles himself, king as he was, managed with difficulty ; for, scarcely established, the protected might again stand in need of the protector, and would, consequently, not refuse him, such being the case, the petty satisfaction of transporting M d'Artagnan, or to confine him in one of the Middlesex prisons, or to drown him a little on his passage from Dover to Boulogne. Such sorts of satisfaction kings are accustomed to render to viceroys without disagreeable consequences. It would not be at all necessary for the king to be active in that *contrepartie* of the piece in which Monk should take his revenge. The part of the king would be confined to simply pardoning the viceroy of Ireland all he should undertake against D'Artagnan. Nothing more was necessary to place the conscience of the Duke of Albemarle at rest than a *te absolvo* said with a laugh, or the scrawl of "Charles the King" traced at the foot of a parchment ; and with these two words pronounced, and these two words written, poor D'Artagnan was for ever crushed under the ruins of his imagination. And then, a thing sufficiently disquieting for a man with such foresight as our musketeer, he found himself alone ; and even the friendship of Athos could not restore his confidence. *Certes*, if the affair had only concerned a free distribution of sword-thrusts, the musketeer would have reckoned upon his companion ; but in delicate matters with a king, when the *perhaps* of an unlucky chance should arise in justification of Monk or of Charles of England, D'Artagnan knew Athos well enough to be sure he would give the best possible colouring to the loyalty of the survivor, and would content himself with shedding floods of tears on the tomb of the dead, supposing the dead to be his friend, and afterwards composing his epitaph in the most pompous superlatives.

"Decidedly," thought the Gascon ; and this thought was the result of the reflections which we had just whispered to himself, and which we have repeated aloud—"decidedly, I must be reconciled with M. Monk, and acquire a proof of his perfect indifference for the past. If, as God forbid it should be so ! he is still sulky and reserved in the expression of this

sentiment, I will give my money to Athos to take away with him ; I will remain in England just long enough to unmask him, then, as I have a quick eye and a light foot, I will seize the first hostile sign ; I will decamp, or conceal myself at the residence of my lord of Buckingham, who seems a good sort of devil at bottom, and to whom, in return for his hospitality, I will then relate all that history of the diamonds, which can now compromise nobody, but an old queen, who need not be ashamed, after being the wife of a poor creature like Mazarin, of having formerly been the mistress of a handsome nobleman like Buckingham. *Mordieux !* that is the thing, and this my lord shall not get the better of me. Eh ! and besides, I have an idea !”

We know that, in general, D'Artagnan was not wanting in ideas ; and during his monologue, D'Artagnan buttoned his vest up to the chin, and nothing excited his imagination like this preparation for a combat of any kind, called *accinction* by the Romans. He was quite heated when he reached the mansion of the Duke of Albemarle. He was introduced to the viceroy with a promptitude which proved that he was considered as one of the household. Monk was in his business-closet.

“My lord,” said D'Artagnan, with that expression of frankness which the Gascon knew so well how to assume, “my lord, I am come to ask your grace's advice !”

Monk, as closely buttoned up morally, as his antagonist was physically, Monk replied : “Ask, my friend ;” and his countenance presented an expression not less open than that of D'Artagnan.

“My lord, in the first place, promise me secrecy and indulgence.”

“I promise you all you wish. What is the matter ? Speak !”

“It is, my lord, that I am not quite pleased with the king.”

“Indeed ! And on what account, my dear lieutenant ?”

“Because his majesty gives way sometimes to pleasantries very compromising for his servants ; and pleantry, my lord, is a weapon that seriously wounds men of the sword, as we are.”

Monk did all in his power not to betray his thought, but D'Artagnan watched him with too close an attention not to detect an almost imperceptible redness upon his face. “Well, now, for my part,” said he, with the most natural air possible, “I am not an enemy to pleantry, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan ; my soldiers will tell you even that many times in camp I listened, very indifferently, and with a certain pleasure, to the satirical songs which the army of Lambert passed into mine, and which, certainly, would have made the ears of a general more susceptible than I am, tingle.”

“Oh ! my lord !” said D'Artagnan, “I know you are a complete man ; I know you have been, for a long time, placed above human miseries ; but there are pleasantries, and pleasantries of a certain kind, which, as to myself, have the power of irritating me beyond expression.”

“May I inquire what kind, my friend ?”

“Such as are directed against my friends, or against people I respect, my lord.”

Monk made a slight movement, but which D'Artagnan perceived. “Eh ! and in what,” asked Monk, “in what can the stroke of a pin which scratches another tickle your skin. Answer me that.”

“My lord, I can explain it to you in one single sentence ; it concerns you.”

Monk advanced a single step towards D'Artagnan. “Concerns me,” said he,

"Yes, and this is what I cannot explain ; but that arises, perhaps, from my want of knowledge of his character. How can the king have the heart to joke about a man who has rendered him so many and such great services? How can one understand that he should amuse himself in setting by the ears a lion like you with a gnat like me?"

"I cannot conceive that in any way," said Monk.

"But so it is. The king, who owed me a reward, might have rewarded me as a soldier, without contriving that history of the ransom, which affects you, my lord."

"No," said Monk, laughing, "it does not affect me in any way, I can assure you."

"Not as regards me, I can understand ; you know me, my lord, I am so discreet, that the grave would appear a babbler compared to me ; but—do you understand, my lord?"

"No," replied Monk, with persistent obstinacy.

"If another knew the secret which I know——"

"What secret?"

"Eh ! my lord, why that unfortunate secret of Newcastle."

"Oh ! the million of M. le comte de la Fère?"

"No, my lord, no ; the enterprise made upon your grace's person."

"It was well played, chevalier, that is all, and no more is to be said about it ; you are a soldier, both brave and cunning, which proves that you unite the qualities of Fabius and Hannibal. You employed your means, force and cunning ; there is nothing to be said against that ; I ought to have been more guarded."

"Ah ! yes ; I know, my lord, and I expected nothing less from your partiality ; so that if it were only the abduction in itself, *mordieux !* that would be nothing ; but there are——"

"What?"——"The circumstances of that abduction."

"What circumstances?"

"Oh ! you know very well what I mean, my lord."

"No, curse me if I do."

"There is——in truth it is difficult to speak it."

"There is?"

"Well, there is that devil of a box !"

Monk coloured visibly. "Well, I have forgotten it."

"Deal box," continued D'Artagnan, "with holes for the nose and mouth. In truth, my lord, all the rest was well ; but the box, the box ! decidedly that was a coarse joke." Monk fidgeted about in his chair. "And, notwithstanding that I have done that," resumed D'Artagnan, "I, a soldier of fortune, it was quite simple, because, by the side of that action, a little inconsiderate I admit, which I committed, but which the gravity of the case may excuse, I possess circumspection and reserve."

"Oh !" said Monk, "believe me, I know you well, Monsieur d'Artagnan, and I appreciate you."

D'Artagnan never took his eyes off Monk ; studying all which passed in the mind of the general as he prosecuted *his idea*. "But it does not concern me," resumed he.

"Well, then, whom does it concern?" said Monk, who began to grow a little impatient.

"It relates to the king, who will never restrain his tongue."

"Well ! and suppose he should say all he knows?" said Monk, with a degree of hesitation.

"My lord," replied D'Artagnan, "do not dissemble, I implore you, with

a man who speaks so frankly as I do. You have a right to feel your susceptibility excited, however benignant it may be. What the devil ! it is not the place for a man like you, a man who plays with crowns and sceptres as a Bohemian plays with his balls ; it is not the place of a serious man, I said, to be shut up in a box like a curious object of natural history ; for you must understand it would make all your enemies ready to burst with laughter, and you are so great, so noble, so generous, that you must have many enemies. This secret is enough to set half the human race laughing, if you were represented in that box. It is not decent to have the second personage in the kingdom laughed at."

Monk was quite out of countenance at the idea of seeing himself represented in his box. Ridicule, as D'Artagnan had judiciously foreseen, acted upon him in a manner which neither the chances of war, the aspirations of ambition, nor the fear of death had been able to do.

"Good !" thought the Gascon, "he is frightened : I am safe."

"Oh ! as to the king," said Monk, "fear nothing, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan ; the king will not jest with Monk, I assure you."

The flash of his eye was intercepted in its passage by D'Artagnan. Monk lowered his tone immediately : "The king," continued he, "is of too noble a nature, the king's heart is too high to allow him to wish ill to those who do him good."

"Oh ! certainly," cried D'Artagnan. "I am entirely of your grace's opinion with regard to his heart, but not as to his head—it is good, but it is trifling."

"The king will not trifle with Monk, be assured."

"Then you are quite at ease, my lord ?"

"On that side, at least ; yes, perfectly."

"Oh ! I understand you, you are at ease as far as the king is concerned ?"

"I have told you I was."

"But you are not so much so on my account ?"

"I thought I had told you that I had faith in your loyalty and discretion."

"Without doubt, without doubt, but you must remember one thing——"

"What is that ?"

"That I was not alone, that I had companions ; and what companions !"

"Oh ! yes, I know them."

"And, unfortunately, my lord, they know you, too !"

"Well ?"

"Well ; they are yonder, at Boulogne, waiting for me."

"And you fear——"

"Yes, I fear that in my absence——*Parbleu !* if I were near them, I could answer for their silence."

"Was I not right in saying that the danger, if there was any danger, would not come from his majesty, however disposed he may be to joke, but from your companions, as you say——To be laughed at by a king may be tolerable, but by the horse-boys and scamps of the army ? Damn it !"

"Yes, I comprehend, that would be insupportable ; that is why, my lord, I came to say,—do you not think it would be better that I should set out for France as soon as possible ?"

"Certainly, if you think your presence——"

"Would impose silence upon these scoundrels ? Oh ! I am sure of that, my lord."

"Your presence will not prevent the report from spreading, if the tale has already transpired."

"Oh! it has not transpired, my lord, I will be bound. At all events, be assured I am determined upon one thing."

"What is that?"

"To blow out the brains of the first who shall have propagated that report, and of the first who has heard it. After which I will return to England to seek an asylum, and perhaps employment with your grace."

"Oh, come back! come back!"

"Unfortunately, my lord, I am acquainted with nobody here but your grace, and if I should no longer find you, or if you should have forgotten me in your greatness?"

"Listen to me, Monsieur d'Artagnan," replied Monk; "you are a superior gentleman, full of intelligence and courage; you merit all the good fortune this world can bring you; come with me into Scotland, and, I swear to you, I will create you a destiny which all may envy."

"Oh! my lord, that is impossible at present. At present I have a sacred duty to perform; I have to watch over your glory, I have to prevent a low joker from tarnishing in the eyes of our contemporaries—who knows? in the eyes of posterity—the splendour of your name."

"Of posterity, Monsieur d'Artagnan?"

"Doubtless. It is necessary, as regards posterity, that all the details of that history should remain a mystery; for, admit that this unfortunate history of the deal box should spread, and it should be asserted that you had not re-established the king loyally, and of your free will, but in consequence of a compromise entered into at Scheveningen between you two, it would be in vain for me to declare how the thing came about, for me, who knew I should not be believed, it would be said that I had received my part of the cake, and was eating it."

Monk knitted his brow.—"Glory, honour, probity!" said he, "you are but words."

"Mist!" replied D'Artagnan; "nothing but mist, through which nobody can see clearly."

"Well, then, go to France, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Monk; "go, and to render England more attractive and agreeable to you, accept a remembrance of me."

"What now?" thought D'Artagnan.

"I have on the banks of the Clyde," continued Monk, "a little house beneath trees, a cottage as it is called here. To this house are attached a hundred acres of land. Accept it as a memorial."

"Oh, my lord!—"

"*Dame!* you will be there in your own home, and that will be the place of refuge you were talking of just now."

"For me to be obliged to your lordship to such an extent! Really, your grace, I am ashamed."

"Not at all, not at all, monsieur," replied Monk, with an arch smile; "it is I who shall be obliged to you. And," pressing the hand of the musketeer, "I will go and draw up the deed of gift," and he left the room.

D'Artagnan looked at him as he went out with something of a pensive and even an agitated air.

"After all," said he, "he is a brave man. It is only a sad reflection that it is from fear of me, and not affection, that he acts thus. Well, I will endeavour that affection may follow." Then, after an instant's deeper reflection,—"*Bah!*" said he, "to what purpose? He is an Englishman."

And he in his turn went out, a little confused with the combat. "So," said he, "I am a land-owner ! But how the devil am I to share the cottage with Planchet ? Unless I give him the land and I take the château, or that he takes the house and I—nonsense ! M. Monk will never allow me to share a house he has inhabited, with a grocer. He is too proud for that. Besides, why should I say anything about it to him ? It was not with the money of the company I have acquired that property, it was with my mother-wit alone ; it is all mine, then. So, now I will go and find Athos." And he directed his steps towards the dwelling of the Comte de la Fère.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN REGULATED THE "PASSIVE" OF THE COMPANY BEFORE HE ESTABLISHED ITS "ACTIVE."

"DECIDEDLY," said D'Artagnan to himself, "I am in good vein. That star which shines once in the life of every man, which shone for Job and Iruis, the most unfortunate of the Jews and the poorest of the Greeks, is come at last to shine on me. I will commit no folly, I will take advantage of it ; it comes quite late enough to find me reasonable."

He supped that evening, in very good humour, with his friend Athos ; he said nothing to him about the expected donation, but he could not forbear questioning his friend, while he was eating, about country produce, sowing, and planting. Athos replied complacently, as he always did. His idea was that D'Artagnan wished to become a proprietor ; only he could not help regretting, more than once, the absence of the lively humour and amusing sallies of the cheerful companion of former days. In fact, D'Artagnan was so absorbed, that, with his knife, he took advantage of the grease left at the bottom of his plate, to trace ciphers and make additions of surprising rotundity. The order, or rather licence, for their embarkation, arrived at Athos' lodgings that evening. At the same time this paper was remitted to the comte, another messenger brought to D'Artagnan a little bundle of parchment, adorned with all the seals employed in setting-off property deeds in England. Athos surprised him turning over the leaves of these different acts which established the transmission of property. The prudent Monk—others would say the generous Monk—had commuted the donation into a sale, and acknowledged the receipt of a sum of fifteen thousand livres as the price of the property ceded. The messenger was gone. D'Artagnan still continued reading. Athos watched him with a smile. D'Artagnan, surprising one of those smiles over his shoulder, put the bundle into its wrapper.

"I beg your pardon," said Athos.

"Oh ! not at all, my friend," replied the lieutenant ; "I will tell you——"

"No, don't tell me anything, I beg you ; orders are things so sacred, that to one's brother, one's father, the person charged with such orders should never open his mouth. Thus I, who speak to you, and love you more tenderly than brother, father, or all the world——"

"Except your Raoul ?"

"I shall love Raoul still better when he shall be a man, and I shall have seen him develop himself in all the phases of his character and his actions—as I have seen you, my friend."

"You said, then, that you had an order likewise, and that you would not communicate it to me."

"Yes, my dear D'Artagnan."

The Gascon sighed. "There was a time," said he, "in which you would have placed that order open upon the table, saying, 'D'Artagnan, read this scrawl to Porthos, Aramis, and me.'"

"That is true. Oh ! that was the time of youth, confidence, the generous season when the blood commands, when it is warmed by feeling !"

"Well ! Athos, will you allow me to tell you ?"

"Speak, my friend !"

"That delightful time, that generous season, that domination of the heated blood, were all very fine things, no doubt : but I do not regret them at all. It is absolutely like the period of studies. I have constantly met with fools who would boast of the days of penums, ferules, and crusts of dry bread. It is singular, but I never loved all that : for my part, however active and sober I might be (you knew if I was so, Athos), so simple as I might appear in my clothes, I would not the less have preferred the braveries and embroideries of Porthos to my little porous cassock, which admitted the wind in winter and the sun in summer. I should always, my friend, mistrust him who would pretend to prefer evil to good. Now, in times past, all was evil with me, the times past in which every month found a fresh hole in my cassock and in my skin, a gold crown less in my poor purse ; of that execrable time of small beer and see-saw, I regret absolutely nothing, nothing, nothing but our friendship ; for within me I have a heart, and it is a miracle that heart has not been dried up by the wind of poverty which passed through the holes of my cloak, or pierced by the swords of all shapes which passed through the holes in my poor flesh."

"Do not regret our friendship," said Athos, "that will only die with ourselves. Friendship is composed, above all things, of remembrances and habits, and if you have just now made a little satire upon mine, because I hesitate to tell you the nature of my mission into France——"

"Who ! I ?—Oh ! heavens ! if you knew, my dear friend, how indifferent all the missions of the world will henceforth become to me !" And he laid his hand upon the parchment in his vast pocket.

Athos rose from the table and called the host in order to pay the reckoning.

"Since I have known you, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "I have never discharged the reckoning. Porthos often did, Aramis sometimes, and you, you almost always drew out your purse with the dessert. I am now rich, and should like to try if it is heroic to pay."

"Do so," said Athos, returning his purse to his pocket.

The two friends then directed their steps towards the park, not, however, without D'Artagnan's frequently turning round to watch the transport of his dear crowns. Night had just spread her thick veil over the yellow waters of the Thames ; they heard those noises of casks and pulleys, the precursors of preparing to sail which had so many times made the hearts of the musketeers beat when the dangers of the sea were the least of those they were going to face. This time they were to embark on board a large vessel which awaited them at Gravesend, and Charles II., always delicate in small matters, had sent one of his yachts, with twelve men of his Scotch guard, to do honour to the ambassador he was deputing to France. At midnight the yacht had deposited its passengers on board the vessel, and at eight o'clock in the morning, the vessel landed the ambassador and his friend before the *jetée* at Boulogne. Whilst the comte, with Grimaud, was busy in procuring horses to go straight to Paris, D'Artagnan hastened to

the hostelry where, according to his orders, his little army was to wait for him. These gentlemen were at breakfast upon oysters, fish, and aromatised brandy, when D'Artagnan appeared. They were all very gay, but not one of them had yet exceeded the bounds of reason. A hurrah of joy welcomed the general. "Here I am," said D'Artagnan, "the campaign is ended. I am come to bring each his supplement of pay, as agreed upon."—Their eyes sparkled. "I will lay a wager there are not, already, a hundred livres remaining in the purse of the richest among you."

"That is true!" cried they in chorus.

"Gentlemen," said D'Artagnan, "then, this is the last order. The treaty of commerce has been concluded, thanks to our *coup-de-main* which made us masters of the most skilful financier of England, for now I am at liberty to confess to you that the man we had to carry off was the treasurer of General Monk."

This word treasurer produced a certain effect in his army. D'Artagnan observed that the eyes of Menneville alone did not evince perfect faith.

"This treasurer," continued D'Artagnan, "I have conveyed to a neutral territory, Holland; I have forced him to sign the treaty; I have even re-conducted him to Newcastle; and as he was obliged to be satisfied with our proceedings towards him—the deal coffer being always carried without jolting, and being lined softly, I asked for a gratification for you. Here it is." He threw a respectable-looking purse upon the cloth; and all, involuntarily, stretched out their hands. "One moment, my lambs," said D'Artagnan; "if there are benefits, there are also charges."

"Oh! oh!" murmured they.

"We are about to find ourselves, my friends, in a position that would not be tenable for people without brains. I speak plainly: we are between the gallows and the Bastille."—"Oh! oh!" said the chorus.

"That is easy to be understood. It was necessary to explain to General Monk the disappearance of his treasurer. I waited for that purpose, till the very unhoped-for moment of the restoration of King Charles II., who is one of my friends."

The army exchanged a glance of satisfaction in reply to the sufficiently proud look of D'Artagnan. "The king being restored, I restored Monk his man of business, a little plucked, it is true, but, in short, I restored him. Now, General Monk, when he pardoned me, for he has pardoned me, could not help repeating these words to me, which I charge every one of you to engrave deeply there, between the eyes, under the vault of the cranium:—'Monsieur, the joke has been a good one, but I don't naturally like jokes; if ever a word of what you have done' (you understand me, M. Menneville) 'escapes from your lips, or the lips of your companions, I have, in my government of Scotland, and Ireland, seven hundred and forty-one wooden gibbets, of strong oak, clamped with iron, and fresh greased every week. I will make a present of one of these gibbets to each of you, and observe well, M. d'Artagnan,' added he, (remark it also, M. Menneville), 'I shall still have seven hundred and thirty left for my private pleasures. And still further——'"

"Ah! ah!" said the auxiliaries, "is there more still?"

"One trouble more. 'Monsieur D'Artagnan, I expedite to the king of France the treaty in question, with a request that he will cast into the Bastille provisionally, and then send to me, all who have taken part in this expedition; and that is a prayer with which the king will certainly comply.'"

A cry of terror broke from all corners of the table.

"There! there! there!" said D'Artagnan, "this brave M. Monk has forgotten one thing, and that is that he does not know the name of a one of you; I alone know you, and it is not I, you may well believe, who will betray you. Why should I? As for you, I cannot suppose you will be silly enough to denounce yourselves, for then the king, to spare himself the expenses of feeding and lodging you, will send you off to Scotland, where the seven hundred and forty-one gibbets are to be found. That is all, messieurs; I have not another word to add to what I have had the honour to tell you. I am sure you have understood me perfectly well, have you not, M. Menneville?"

"Perfectly," replied the latter.

"Now the crowns!" said D'Artagnan. "Shut the doors," he cried, and opened the bag upon the table, from which rolled several fine gold crowns. Every one made a movement towards the floor.

"Gently!" cried D'Artagnan, "I insist upon it nobody stoops, and then I shall not be out in my reckoning." He found it all right; gave fifty of those splendid crowns to each man, and received as many benedictions as he bestowed pieces. "Now," said he, "if it were possible for you to reform a little, if you could become good and honest citizens——"

"That is rather difficult," said one of the troop.

"What then, captain?" said another.

"Because I might be able to find you again, and, who knows? refresh you from time to time by some windfall." He made a sign to Menneville, who listened to all he said with a composed air. "Menneville," said he, "come with me. Adieu, my brave fellows! I need not recommend you to be discreet."

Menneville followed him, whilst the salutations of the auxiliaries were mingled with the sweet sound of the money clinking in their pockets.

"Menneville," said D'Artagnan, when they were once in the street, "you were not my dupe; beware of being so. You did not appear to me to have any fear of the gibbets of Monk, or the Bastille of his majesty King Louis XIV., but you will do me the favour of being afraid of me. Then listen; at the smallest word that shall escape you, I will kill you as I would a fowl. I have absolution from our holy father the pope in my pocket."

"I assure you I know absolutely nothing, my dear M. d'Artagnan, and that your words have all been to me so many articles of faith.

"I was quite sure you were an intelligent fellow," said the musketeer; "I have tried you for a length of time. These fifty gold crowns which I give you more than the rest, will prove the estimation I hold you in. Take them."

"Thanks, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Menneville.

"With that sum you can really become an honest man," replied D'Artagnan, in the most serious tone possible. "It would be disgraceful for a mind like yours, and a name you no longer dare to bear, to sink for ever under the rust of an evil life. Become a gallant man, Menneville, and live for a year upon those hundred gold crowns: it is a good provision; twice that of a high officer. In a year come to me, and, *Mordieux!* I will make something of you."

Menneville swore, as his comrades had sworn, that he would be as mute as the tomb. And yet some one must have spoken; and as, to a certainty, it was not one of the nine companions, as, equally certainly, it was not Menneville, it must have been D'Artagnan, who, in his quality of a Gascon, had his tongue very near to his lips. For, in short, if it was not he, who

could it be? And how can it be explained that the secret of the deal coffer pierced with holes should come to our knowledge, and in so complete a fashion that we have, as has been seen, related the history of it in all its details the most intimate ; details which, besides, throw a light as new as unexpected upon all that portion of the history of England which has been left, up to the present day, completely in the shade by the historians of our neighbours?

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN WHICH IT IS SEEN THAT THE FRENCH GROCER HAD ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

HIS accounts once settled, and his recommendations made, D'Artagnan thought of nothing but regaining Paris as soon as possible. Athos, on his part, was anxious to reach home and to repose a little. However entire may remain the character and the man after the fatigues of a voyage, the traveller perceives with pleasure, at the close of the day,—even though the day has been a fine one,—that night is approaching, and will bring a little sleep with it. So, from Boulogne to Paris, jogging on side by side, the two friends, in some degree absorbed each in his individual thoughts, conversed of nothing sufficiently interesting for us to intrude upon our readers with. Each of them, given up to his personal reflections, and constructing his future after his own fashion, was above all anxious to abridge the distance by speed. Athos and D'Artagnan arrived at the barriers of Paris on the evening of the fourth day after leaving Boulogne.

"Where are you going, my friend?" asked Athos. "I shall direct my course straight to my hotel."

"And I straight to my partner's."

"To Planchet's?"—"Good Lord, yes ; at the 'Pilon d'Or.'"

"Well, but shall we not meet again?"

"If you remain in Paris, yes ; for I shall stay here."

"No ; after having embraced Raoul, with whom I have appointed a meeting at my hotel, I shall set out immediately for La Fère."

"Well, adieu, then, dear and true friend."

"*Au revoir* ! I should rather say, for why can you not come and live with me at Blois? You are free ; you are rich. I will purchase for you, if you like, a handsome property in the environs of Cheveray or of Bracieux. On the one side you will have the finest woods in the world, which join those of Chambord ; on the other, admirable marshes. You, who love sporting, and who, whether you admit it or not, are a poet, my dear friend, you will find pheasants, rail, and teal, without reckoning sunsets and excursions on the water, to make you fancy yourself Nimrod and Apollo themselves. Awaiting the acquisition, you can live at La Fère, and we will go together to fly our hawks among the vines, as Louis XIII. used to do. That is a quiet amusement for old fellows like us."

D'Artagnan took the hands of Athos in his own. "Dear comte," said he, "I will neither say 'Yes' nor 'No.' Let me pass in Paris the time necessary for the regulation of my affairs, and accustom myself, by degrees, to the heavy and glittering idea which is beating in my brains and dazzles them. I am rich, do you see, and from this moment till the time I have acquired the habit of being rich, I know myself, and I shall be an unsupportable animal. Now, I am not enough of a fool to wish to appear to

have lost my wits before a friend like you, Athos. The habit is handsome, the habit is richly gilded, but it is new, and does not seem to fit me."

Athos smiled. "So be it," said he. "But *à propos* of this habit, dear D'Artagnan, will you allow me to offer you a little advice?"

"Yes, willingly."

"You will not be angry?"—"Proceed."

"When wealth falls to any one late or all at once, that any one, in order not to change, will most likely become a miser, that is to say, will not spend much more money than he had done before; or else become a prodigal, and contract so many debts as to become poor again."

"Oh! but what you say looks very much like a sophism, my dear philosophic friend."

"I do not think so. Will you become a miser?"

"No, *pardieu*! I was one already, having nothing. Let us change."

"Then be prodigal."

"Still less, *mordieux*! Debts terrify me. Creditors appear to me, by anticipation, those devils who turn the damned upon the gridirons, and as patience is not my dominant virtue, I am always tempted to thrash those devils."

"You are the wisest man I know, and stand in no need of counsel from any one. Great fools must they be who think they have anything to teach you. But are we not at the Rue Saint Honoré?"—"Yes, dear Athos."

"Look yonder, on the left, that small, long white house is the hotel at which I lodge. You may observe that it has but two stages; I occupy the first; the other is let to an officer, whose duties oblige him to be absent eight or nine months in the year,—so I am in that house as at my own home, without the expense."

"Oh! how well you manage, Athos! What order and what liberality! They are what I wish to unite! But, of what use trying! that comes from birth, and cannot be acquired."

"You are a flatterer! Well! adieu, dear friend. *Apropos*, remember me to master Planchet, he was always a lad of spirit."

"And of heart too, Athos. Adieu."

And they separated. During all this conversation, D'Artagnan had not for a moment lost sight of a certain pack-horse, in whose panniers, under some hay, were spread the *sacoches* (messenger's bags) with the portman-teau. Nine o'clock was striking at Saint-Mine; Planchet's lads were shutting up his shop. D'Artagnan stopped the postilion who rode the pack-horse, at the corner of the Rue des Lombards, under a pent-house, and calling one of Planchet's boys, he desired him not only to take care of the two horses, but to watch the postilion; after which he entered the shop of the grocer, who had just finished supper, and who, in his little private room was, with a degree of anxiety, consulting the calendar, from which, every evening, he scratched out the day that was past. At the moment when Planchet, according to his daily custom, with the back of his pen, erased another day, D'Artagnan kicked with his feet at the door, and the blow made his steel spur jingle. "Oh! good Lord!" cried Planchet. The worthy grocer could say no more; he perceived his partner. D'Artagnan entered with a bent back and a dull eye: the Gascon had an idea with regard to Planchet.

"Good God!" thought the grocer, looking earnestly at the traveller, "he looks very sad!" The musketeer sat down.

"My dear Monsieur d'Artagnan!" said Planchet, with a horrible palpitation of the heart. "Here you are! and your health?"

"Tolerably good, Planchet, tolerably good!" said D'Artagnan, with a profound sigh.

"You have not been wounded, I hope?"—"Pugh!"

"Ah! I see," continued Planchet, more and more alarmed, "the expedition has been a trying one?"

"Yes," said D'Artagnan. A shudder ran through the whole frame of Planchet. "I should like to have something to drink," said the musketeer, raising his head piteously.

Planchet ran to the cupboard, and poured D'Artagnan out some wine in a large glass. D'Artagnan examined the bottle.

"What wine is that?" asked he.

"Alas! that which you prefer, monsieur," said Planchet; "that good old Anjou wine, which was one day nearly costing us all so dear."

"Ah!" replied D'Artagnan, with a melancholy smile, "Ah! my poor Planchet! ought I still to drink good wine?"

"Come! my dear master," said Planchet, making a superhuman effort, whilst all his contracted muscles, his paleness, and his trembling, betrayed the most acute anguish. "Come! I have been a soldier, and consequently have some courage; do not make me linger, dear Monsieur d'Artagnan; our money is lost, is it not?"

Before he answered, D'Artagnan took time, which appeared an age to the poor grocer. Nevertheless, he did nothing but turn about upon his chair.

"And if that were the case," said he, slowly, moving his head up and down, "if that were the case, what would you say, my dear friend?"

Planchet, from being pale turned yellow. It might have been thought he was going to swallow his tongue, so full became his throat, so red were his eyes!

"Twenty thousand livres!" murmured he. "Twenty thousand livres, though——"

D'Artagnan, with his neck elongated, his legs stretched out, and his hands hanging listlessly, looked like a statue of discouragement. Planchet tore up a sigh from the deepest cavities of his breast.

"Well," said he, "I see how it is. Let us be men! It is all over, is it not? The principal thing is, monsieur, that you have saved your life."

"Doubtless! doubtless!—life is something—but I am ruined!"

"*Cordieu!* monsieur!" said Planchet, "if it is so, we must not despair for that; you shall become a grocer with me; I will make you my partner, we will share the profits, and if there should be no more profits, well, why then we will share the almonds, raisins, and prunes, and we will nibble together the last quarter of Dutch cheese."

D'Artagnan could hold out no longer. "*Mordioux!*" cried he, with great emotion, "thou art a brave fellow, by my honour, Planchet. You have not been playing comedy, have you? You have not seen the pack-horse with the *sacoches* under the shed yonder?"

"What horse? What *sacoches*?" said Planchet, whose trembling heart began to suggest that D'Artagnan was mad.

"Why! the English bags, *mordioux!*" said D'Artagnan, all radiant, quite transfigured.

"Ah! good God!" articulated Planchet, drawing back before the dazzling fire of his looks.

"Imbecile!" cried D'Artagnan, "you think me mad! *mordioux!* on the contrary, never was my head more clear, or my heart more joyous. To the *sacoches*, Planchet, to the *sacoches!*"

"But to what *sacoches*, *mon Dieu* !"

D'Artagnan pushed Planchet towards the window. "Under the pent-house, yonder, don't you see a horse ?"—"Yes."

"Don't you see how his back is laden ?"—"Yes, yes !"

"Don't you see your lad chatting with the postilion ?"

"Yes, yes, yes !"

"Well ! you know the name of that lad, because he is your own Call him."

"Abdon ! Abdon !" vociferated Planchet from the window.

"Bring the horse !" shouted D'Artagnan.

"Bring the horse !" screamed Planchet.

"Now give ten livres to the postilion," said D'Artagnan, in the tone he would have employed in commanding a manœuvre ; "two lads to bring up the two first *sacoches*, two to bring up the two last—and move, *mordioux* ! be alive !"

Planchet precipitated himself down the stairs, as if the devil had been at his heels. The moment after, the lads ascended the staircase, bending beneath their burden. D'Artagnan sent them off to their garrets, carefully closed the door, and addressing Planchet, who, in his turn, looked little wild,—

"Now, we are by ourselves," said he ; and he spread upon the floor a large cover, and emptied the first *sacoches* into it. Planchet did the same with the second ; then D'Artagnan, all in a tremble, let out the precious bowels of the third with a knife. When Planchet heard the provoking sound of the silver and gold—when he saw bubbling out of the bags the shining crowns, which glittered like fish from the sweep-net—when he felt himself plunging his hands up to the elbow in that still rising tide of yellow and silver pieces, a giddiness seized him, and he sank, like a man who is thunderstruck, heavily down upon the enormous heap, which his weight caused to roll away in all directions. Planchet, suffocated with joy, had lost his senses. D'Artagnan threw a glass of white wine in his face, which, incontinently, recalled him to life.

"Ah ! good heavens ! good heavens ! good heavens !" said Planchet, wiping his moustache and beard.

At that time, as they do now, grocers wore the cavalier moustache and the lansquenet beard, only the *bains d'argent*, already become rare in those days, have become almost unknown now.

"*Mordioux* !" said D'Artagnan, "there are a hundred thousand livres for you, partner. Draw your share, if you please ! and I will draw mine."

"Oh ! the lovely sum ! Monsieur d'Artagnan, the lovely sum !"

"I confess that, half an hour ago, I regretted that I had to give you so much ; but I now no longer regret it ; thou art a brave grocer, Planchet. There, let us close our accounts, for, as they say, short reckonings make long friends."

"Oh ! rather, in the first place, tell me the whole history," said Planchet, "that must be better than the money."

"*Ma foi* !" said D'Artagnan, stroking his moustache, "I can't say no ; and if ever the historian turns to me for information, he will be able to say he has not dipped his bucket into a dry spring. Listen then, Planchet, I will tell you all about it."

"And I will build piles of crowns," said Planchet. "Commence, my dear master."

"Well, this is it," said D'Artagnan, drawing breath.

"And that is it," said Planchet, picking up his first handful of crowns.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## MAZARIN'S GAMING PARTY.

IN a large chamber of the Palais-Royal, covered with a dark coloured velvet, which threw into strong relief the gilded frames of a great number of magnificent pictures, on the evening of the arrival of the two Frenchmen, the whole court was assembled before the alcove of M. le cardinal de Mazarin, who gave a party, for the purposes of play, to the king and queen. A small screen separated three prepared tables. At one of these tables the king and the two queens were seated. Louis XIV., placed opposite to the young queen, his wife, smiled upon her with an expression of real happiness. Anne of Austria held the cards against the cardinal, and her daughter-in-law assisted her in her game, when she was not engaged in smiling at her husband. As for the cardinal, who was reclining on his bed, his cards were held by the Comtesse de Soissons, and he watched them with an incessant look of interest and cupidity.

The cardinal had been painted by Bernouin; but the rouge, which showed only on his cheeks, threw into stronger contrast the sickly pallor of the rest of his countenance and the shining yellow of his brow. His eyes alone acquired a more lively expression from this auxiliary, and upon those sick man's eyes were, from time to time, turned the uneasy looks of the king, the queen, and the courtiers. The fact is, that the two eyes of the signor Mazarin were the stars more or less brilliant in which the France of the seventeenth century read its destiny every evening and every morning. Monseigneur neither won nor lost; he was, therefore, neither gay nor sad. It was a stagnation in which, full of pity for him, Anne of Austria would not have willingly left him; but in order to attract the attention of the sick man by some brilliant stroke, she must have either won or lost. To win would have been dangerous, because Mazarin would have changed his indifference for an ugly grimace; to lose would likewise have been dangerous, because she must have cheated, and the infant, who watched her game, would, doubtless, have exclaimed against her partiality for Mazarin. Profiting by this calm, the courtiers were chatting. When not in a bad humour, M. de Mazarin was a very *débonnaire* prince, and he, who prevented nobody from singing, provided they paid, was not tyrant enough to prevent people from talking, provided they made up their minds to lose. They were chatting then. At the first table, the king's younger brother, Philip, duc d'Anjou, was admiring his handsome face in the glass of a box. His favourite, the Chevalier de Lorraine, leaning over the *fauteuil* of the prince, was listening, with secret envy, to the Comte de Guiche, another of Philip's favourites, who was relating in choice terms the various vicissitudes of fortune of the royal adventurer Charles II. He told, as so many fabulous events, all the history of his peregrinations in Scotland, and his terrors when the enemy's party was so closely on his track; of nights passed in trees, and days passed in hunger and combats. By degrees, the fate of the unfortunate king interested his auditors so greatly, that the play languished even at the royal table, and the young king, with a pensive look and downcast eye, followed, without appearing to give any attention to it, the smallest details of this Odyssey, very picturesquely related by the Comte de Guiche.

The Comtesse de Soissons interrupted the narrator, "Confess, comte, you are inventing."

"Madame, I am repeating like a parrot all the histories related to me

by different Englishmen. I am compelled to my shame to say, I am as textual as a copy."

"Charles II. would have died before he could have endured all that."

Louis XIV. raised his intelligent and proud head, "Madame," said he in a grave tone, still partaking something of the timid child, "monsieur le cardinal will tell you that in my minority, the affairs of France have been in jeopardy,—and that if I had been older, and obliged to take sword in hand, it would sometimes have been for the evening meal."

"Thanks to God," said the cardinal, who spoke for the first time, "your majesty exaggerates, and your supper has always been ready with that of your servants."

The king coloured.

"Oh!" cried Philip, inconsiderately, from his place, and without ceasing to admire himself,—“I recollect once, at Milan, the supper was laid for nobody, and that the king ate two thirds of a slice of bread, and abandoned to me the other third.”

The whole assembly, seeing Mazarin smile, began to laugh. Courtiers flatter kings with the remembrance of past distresses, as with the hopes of future good fortune.

"It is not to be denied that the crown of France has always remained firm upon the heads of its kings," Anne of Austria hastened to say, "and that it has fallen off from that of the king of England; and when, by chance, that crown oscillated a little,—for there are throne-quakes as well as earthquakes,—every time, I say, that rebellion threatened it, a good victory restored tranquillity."

"With a few gems added to the crown," said Mazarin.

The Comte de Guiche was silent; the king composed his countenance, and Mazarin exchanged looks with Anne of Austria, as if to thank her for her intervention.

"It is of no consequence," said Philip, smoothing his hair; "my cousin Charles is not handsome, but he is very brave, and has fought like a Reister; and if he continues to fight thus, no doubt he will finish by gaining a battle, like Rocroy——"

"He has no soldiers," interrupted the Chevalier de Lorraine.

"The king of Holland, his ally, will give him some. I would willingly have given him some if I had been king of France."

Louis XIV. blushed excessively. Mazarin affected to be more attentive to his game than ever.

"By this time," resumed the Comte de Guiche, "the fortune of this unhappy prince is decided. If he has been deceived by Monk he is ruined. Imprisonment, perhaps death, will finish what exile, battles, and privations have commenced."

Mazarin's brow became clouded.

"Is it certain," said Louis XIV., "that his majesty Charles II. has quitted the Hague?"

"Quite certain, your majesty," replied the young man; "my father has received a letter containing all the details; it is even known that the king has landed at Dover; some fishermen saw him entering the port; the rest is still a mystery."

"I should like to know the rest," said Philip, impetuously. "You know, —you, my brother."

Louis XIV. coloured again. That was the third time within an hour. "Ask monsieur le cardinal," replied he, in a tone which made Mazarin, Anne of Austria, and everybody else, open their eyes.

"Which means, my son," said Anne of Austria, laughing, "that the king does not like affairs of state to be talked of out of the council."

Philip received the reprimand with a good grace, and bowed, first smiling at his brother, and then at his mother. But Mazarin saw from the corner of his eye that a group was about to be formed in the corner of the room, and that the Duc d'Anjou, with the Comte de Guiche, and the Chevalier de Lorraine, prevented from talking aloud, might say, in a whisper, what it was not convenient should be said. He was beginning then to dart at them glances full of mistrust and uneasiness, inviting Anne of Austria to throw perturbation amidst the unlawful assembly, when, suddenly, Bernouin, entering under the tapestry of the bedroom, whispered in the ear of Mazarin, "Monseigneur, an envoy from his majesty the king of England."

Mazarin could not help exhibiting a slight emotion, which was perceived by the king. To avoid being indiscreet, still less than not to appear useless, Louis XIV. rose immediately, and approaching his eminence, wished him good night. All the assembly had risen with a great noise of rolling of chairs and tables being pushed away.

"Let everybody depart by degrees," said Mazarin in a whisper to Louis XIV., "and be so good as to excuse me a few minutes. I am going to expedite an affair about which I wish to converse with your majesty this very evening."

"And the queens?" asked Louis XIV.

"And M. le duc d'Anjou," said his eminence.

At the same time he turned round in his *ruelle*, the curtains of which, in falling, concealed the bed. The cardinal, nevertheless, did not lose sight of the conspirators.

"M. le comte de Guiche," said he in a fretful voice, whilst putting on, behind the curtain, his robe de chambre, with the assistance of Bernouin.

"I am here, monseigneur," said the young man, as he approached.

"Take my cards, you are lucky. Win a little money for me of these gentlemen."

"Yes, monseigneur."

The young man sat down at the table from which the king withdrew to talk with the two queens. A serious game was commenced between the comte and several rich courtiers. In the mean time Philip was discussing questions of dress with the Chevalier de Lorraine, and they had ceased to hear the rustling of the cardinal's silk robe from behind the curtain. His eminence had followed Bernouin into the closet adjoining the bed-room

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## CHAPTER XL.

### AN AFFAIR OF STATE.

THE cardinal, on passing into his cabinet, found the Comte de la Fère, who was waiting for him, engaged in admiring a very fine Raphael placed over a side-board covered with plate. His eminence came in softly, lightly, and silently as a shadow, and surprised the countenance of the comte, as he was accustomed to do, pretending to divine by the simple expression of the face of his interlocutor, what would be the result of the conversation. But, this time, Mazarin was disappointed in his expectation; he read nothing upon the face of Athos, not even the respect he was accustomed to meet with on all faces. Athos was dressed in black, with a simple lacing

of silver. He wore the Holy Ghost, the Garter, and the Golden Fleece, three orders of such importance, that a king alone, or else a player, could wear them at once.

Mazarin rummaged a long time in his somewhat troubled memory to recall the name he ought to give to this icy figure, but he did not succeed. "I am told," said he, at length, "you have a message from England for me."

And he sat down, dismissing Bernouin, who, in his quality of secretary, was getting his pen ready.

"On the part of his majesty, the king of England, yes, your eminence."

"You speak very good French, for an Englishman, monsieur," said Mazarin graciously, looking through his fingers at the Holy Ghost, Garter, and Golden Fleece, but more particularly at the face of the messenger.

"I am not an Englishman, but a Frenchman, monsieur le cardinal," replied Athos.

"It is remarkable that the king of England should choose a Frenchman for his ambassador ; it is an excellent augury. Your name, monsieur, if you please."

"Comte de la Fère," replied Athos, bowing more slightly than the ceremonial and pride of the all-powerful minister required.

Mazarin bent his shoulders, as if to say :—"I do not know that name."

Athos did not alter his carriage.

"And you come, monsieur," continued Mazarin, "to tell me——"

"I come on the part of his majesty the king of Great Britain to announce to the king of France——" Mazarin frowned. "To announce to the king of France," continued Athos, imperturbably, "the happy restoration of his majesty Charles II. to the throne of his ancestors."

This shade did not escape his cunning eminence. Mazarin was too much accustomed to mankind, not to see in the cold and almost haughty politeness of Athos, an index of hostility, which was not of the temperature of that hot-house called a court.

"You have powers, I suppose?" asked Mazarin, in a short querulous tone.

"Yes, monseigneur." And the word "monseigneur" came so painfully from the lips of Athos, that it might be said it skinned them.

"In that case, show them."

Athos took from an embroidered velvet bag which he carried under his *pourpoint*, a despatch. The cardinal held out his hand for it. "Your pardon, monseigneur," said Athos. "My despatch is for the king."

"Since you are a Frenchman, monsieur, you ought to know what the position of a prime minister is at the court of France."

"There was a time," replied Athos, "when I occupied myself with the importance of prime ministers ; but I have formed, long ago, a resolution to treat no longer with any but the king."

"Then, monsieur," said Mazarin, who began to be irritated, "you will neither see the minister nor the king."

Mazarin rose. Athos replaced his despatch in its bag, bowed gravely and made several steps towards the door. This coolness exasperated Mazarin. "What strange diplomatic proceedings are these !" cried he. "Are we again in the times in which Cromwell sent us bullies in the guise of *chargés d'affaires* ? You want nothing, monsieur, but the steel cap on your head, and a bible at your girdle."

"Monsieur," said Athos drily, "I have never had, as you have, the advantage of treating with M. Cromwell ; and I have only seen his *chargés d'affaires* sword in hand : I am therefore ignorant of how he treated with prime ministers. As for the king of England, Charles II., I know that

when he writes to his majesty king Louis XIV., he does not write to his eminence the Cardinal Mazarin. I see no diplomacy in that distinction."

"Ah!" cried Mazarin, raising his attenuated hand, and striking his head: "I remember now!" Athos looked at him in astonishment. "Yes, that is it!" said the cardinal, continuing to look at his interlocutor; "yes, that is certainly it. I know you now, monsieur. Ah! *diavolo!* I am no longer astonished."

"In fact, I was astonished that with the excellent memory your eminence has," replied Athos, smiling, "you have not recognised me before."

"Always refractory and grumbling—monsieur—monsieur—What do they call you? Stop—a name of a river—Potamos; no—the name of an island—Naxos; no, per Giove!—the name of a mountain—Athos! now I have it. Delighted to see you again, and to be no longer at Rueil, where you and your damned companions made me pay ransom. Fronde! still Fronde! accursed Fronde! Oh, what grudges! Why, monsieur, have your antipathies survived mine? If any one had cause to complain, I think it could not be you, who got out of the affair not only in a sound skin, but with the *cordon* of the Holy Ghost round your neck."

"Monsieur le cardinal," replied Athos, "permit me not to enter into considerations of that kind. I have a mission to fulfil. Will you facilitate the means for my fulfilling that mission, or will you not?"

"I am astonished," said Mazarin,—"quite delighted at having regained the remembrance;" and, bristling with malicious points, "I am astonished, monsieur—Athos—that a *Frondeur* like you should have accepted a mission to Mazarin, as used to be said in the good old times——" And Mazarin began to laugh, in spite of a painful cough, which cut short his sentences, converting them into sobs.

"I have only accepted the mission to the king of France, monsieur le cardinal," retorted the comte, though with less asperity, for he thought he had sufficiently the advantage to show himself moderate.

"And yet, *Monsieur le Frondeur*," said Mazarin gaily, "the affair with which you charge yourself must, from the king——"

"With which I am charged, monseigneur. I do not run after affairs."

"Be it so. I say that this negotiation must pass through my hands. Let us lose no precious time, then. Tell me the conditions."

"I have had the honour of assuring your eminence that the letter alone of his majesty King Charles II. contains the revelation of his wishes."

"Pooh! you are ridiculous with your obstinacy, Monsieur Athos. It is plain you have kept company with the Puritans yonder. As to your secret, I know it better than you do; and you have done wrongly, perhaps, in not having shown some respect for a very old and suffering man, who has laboured much during his life, and kept the field bravely for his ideas, as you have for yours.—You will not communicate your letter to me?—You will say nothing to me?—Wonderfully well! Come with me into my chamber; you shall speak to the king—and before the king.—Now then, one last word: who gave you the Fleece? I remember you passed for having the Garter; but as to the Fleece, I did not know——"

"Recently, monseigneur, Spain, on the occasion of the marriage of his majesty Louis XIV., sent King Charles II. a *brevet* of the Fleece in blank; Charles II. immediately transmitted it to me, filling up the blank with my name."

Mazarin arose, and leaning on the arm of Bernouin, he returned to his *ruelle* at the moment the name of M. le Prince was being announced. The Prince de Condé, the first prince of the blood, the conqueror of Rocroy

Lens, and Nordlingen, was, in fact, entering the apartment of Monseigneur de Mazarin, followed by his gentlemen, and had already saluted the king, when the prime minister raised his curtain. Athos had time to see Raoul pressing the hand of the Comte de Guiche, and to return him a smile for his respectful bow. He had time, likewise, to see the radiant countenance of the cardinal, when he perceived before him, upon the table, an enormous heap of gold, which the Comte de Guiche had won in a run of luck, after his eminence had confided his cards to him. So, forgetting ambassador, embassy, and prince, his first thought was of the gold. "What!" cried the old man—"all that—won?"

"Some fifty thousand crowns; yes, monseigneur," replied the Comte de Guiche, rising. "Must I give up my place to your eminence, or shall I continue?"

"Give up! give up! you are mad. You would lose all you have won. *Peste!*"

"Monseigneur!" said the Prince de Condé, bowing.

"Good evening, Monsieur le Prince," said the minister, in a careless tone; "it is very kind of you to visit an old sick friend."

"A friend!" murmured the Comte de la Fère, at witnessing with stupor this monstrous alliance of words;—"friend! when the parties are Condé and Mazarin!"

Mazarin seemed to divine the thought of the *Frondeur*, for he smiled upon him with triumph, and immediately,—*"Sire,"* said he to the king, "I have the honour of presenting to your majesty, Monsieur le comte de la Fère, ambassador from his Britannic majesty. An affair of state, messieurs," added he, waving his hand to all who filled the chamber, and who, the Prince de Condé at their head, all disappeared at the simple gesture. Raoul, after a last look cast at the comte, followed M. de Condé. Philip of Anjou and the queen appeared to be consulting about departing.

"A family affair," said Mazarin, suddenly, detaining them in their seats. "This gentleman is bearer of a letter, in which King Charles II., completely restored to his throne, demands an alliance between Monsieur, the brother of the king, and Mademoiselle Henrietta, granddaughter of Henry IV. Will you remit your letter of credit to the king, monsieur le comte?"

Athos remained for a minute stupefied. How could the minister possibly know the contents of the letter, which had never been out of his keeping for a single instant? Nevertheless, always master of himself, he held out the despatch to the young king, Louis XIV., who took it with a blush. A solemn silence reigned in the chamber of the cardinal. It was only, troubled by the dull sound of the gold which Mazarin, with his yellow, dry hand, piled up in a *coffret*, whilst the king was reading.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE RECITAL.

THE malice of the cardinal did not leave much for the ambassador to say; nevertheless, the word "restoration" had struck the king, who, addressing the comte, upon whom his eyes had been fixed since his entrance,—*"Monsieur,"* said he, "will you have the kindness to give us some details of English affairs. You come from that country, you are a Frenchman and the orders which I see glitter upon your person announce you to be a man of merit as well as a man of quality."

"Monsieur," said the cardinal, turning towards the queen-mother, "is an ancient servant of your majesty's, Monsieur le comte de la Fère."

Anne of Austria was as oblivious as a queen whose life had been mingled with fine and stormy days. She looked at Mazarin, whose malign smile promised her some little disagreeable; then she solicited from Athos, by another look, an explanation.

"Monsieur," continued the cardinal, "was a Tréville musketeer, in the service of the late king. Monsieur is well acquainted with England, whither he has made several voyages at various periods; he is a subject of the highest merit."

These words made allusion to all the remembrances which Anne of Austria trembled to evoke. England, that was her hatred of Richelieu and her love of Buckingham; a Tréville musketeer, that was the whole Odyssey of the triumphs which had made the heart of the young woman throb, and of the dangers which had been so near overturning the throne of the young queen. These words had much power, for they rendered mute and attentive all the royal personages, who, with very various sentiments, set about recomposing at the same time the mysterious, which the young had not seen, and which the old had believed to be for ever effaced.

"Speak, monsieur," said Louis XIV., the first to escape from troubles, suspicions, and remembrances.

"Yes, speak," added Mazarin, to whom the little piece of malice inflicted upon Anne of Austria had restored energy and gaiety.

"Sire," said the comte, "a sort of miracle has changed the whole destiny of Charles II. That which men, till that time, had been unable to do, God resolved to accomplish."

Mazarin coughed, while tossing about in his bed.

"King Charles II.," continued Athos, "left the Hague neither as a fugitive nor a conqueror, but like an absolute king, who, after a distant voyage from his kingdom, returns amidst universal benedictions."

"A great miracle, indeed," said Mazarin; "for, if the news was true, King Charles II., who has just returned amidst benedictions, went away amidst musket-shots."

The king remained impassible. Philip, younger and more frivolous, could not repress a smile, which flattered Mazarin as an applause of his pleasantry.

"It is plain," said the king, "there is a miracle; but God, who does so much for kings, monsieur le comte, nevertheless employs the hands of man to bring about the triumph of His designs. To what men does Charles II. principally owe his re-establishment?"

"Why," interrupted Mazarin, "without any regard for the self-love of the king, does not your majesty know that it is to M. Monk?"

"I ought to know it," replied Louis XIV., resolutely; "and yet I ask monsieur, the ambassador, the causes of the change in this Monsieur Monk?"

"And your majesty touches precisely the question," replied Athos; "for without the miracle I have had the honour to speak of, Monsieur Monk would probably have remained an implacable enemy to Charles II. God willed that a strange, bold, and ingenious idea should enter into the mind of a certain man, whilst a devoted and courageous idea took possession of the mind of another man. The combination of these two ideas brought about such a change in the position of M. Monk, that, from an inveterate enemy, he became a friend to the deposed king."

"These are exactly the details I asked for," said the king. "Who and what are the two men of whom you speak?"

"Two Frenchmen, sire."

"Indeed ! I am glad of that."

"And the two ideas," said Mazarin ;—"I am more curious about ideas than about men, for my part."

"Yes," murmured the king.

"The second idea, the devoted, reasonable idea—the least important, sire—was to go and dig up a million in gold, buried by King Charles I. at Newcastle, and to purchase with that gold the adherence of Monk."

"Oh, oh !" said Mazarin, reanimated by the word million. "But Newcastle was at the time occupied by Monk."

"Yes, monsieur le cardinal, and that is why I venture to call the idea courageous as well as devoted. It was necessary, if Monk refused the offers of the negotiator, to reinstate King Charles II. in possession of this million, which was to be torn, as it were, from the loyalty and not the loyalism of General Monk. This was effected, in spite of many difficulties : the general proved to be loyal, and allowed the money to be taken away."

"It seems to me," said the timid, thoughtful king, "that Charles II. could not have known of this million whilst he was in Paris."

"It seems to me," rejoined the cardinal maliciously, "that his majesty the king of Great Britain knew perfectly well of this million, but that he preferred having two millions to having one."

"Sire," said Athos firmly, "the king of England, whilst in France, was so poor that he had not even money to take the post ; so destitute of hope that he frequently thought of dying. He was so entirely ignorant of the existence of the million at Newcastle, that but for a gentleman—one of your majesty's subjects—the moral depository of the million, and who revealed the secret to King Charles II., that prince would still be vegetating in the most cruel forgetfulness."

"Let us pass on to the strange, bold, and ingenious idea," interrupted Mazarin, whose sagacity foresaw a check. "What was that idea?"

"This—M. Monk formed the only obstacle to the re-establishment of the fallen king. A Frenchman imagined the idea of suppressing this obstacle."

"Oh ! oh ! but that is a scoundrel, that Frenchman," said Mazarin ; "and the idea is not so ingenious as to prevent its author being tied up by the neck at the Place de Grève, by decree of the parliament."

"Your eminence is mistaken," replied Athos, dryly ; "I did not say that the Frenchman in question had resolved to assassinate M. Monk, but only to suppress him. The words of the French language have a value which the gentlemen of France know perfectly. Besides this is an affair of war ; and when men serve kings against their enemies they are not to be condemned by a parliament—God is their judge. This French gentleman, then, formed the idea of gaining possession of the person of Monk, and he executed his plan."

The king became animated at the recital of great actions. The king's younger brother struck the table with his hand, exclaiming, "Ah ! that is fine !"

"He carried off Monk?" said the king. "Why, Monk was in his camp."

"And the gentleman was alone, sire."

"That is marvellous !" said Philip.

"Marvellous indeed !" cried the king.

"Good! There are two little lions unchained," murmured the cardinal. And with an air of spite, which he did not dissemble: "I am unacquainted with these details, will you guarantee the authenticity of them, monsieur?"

"All the more easily, monsieur le cardinal, from having seen the events."

"You have?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

The king had involuntarily drawn close to the comte, the Duc d'Anjou had turned sharply round, and pressed Athos on the other side.

"Next! monsieur, next!" cried they both at the same time.

"Sire, M. Monk, being taken by the Frenchman, was brought to King Charles II., at the Hague. The king restored Monk his liberty, and the grateful general, in return, gave Charles II. the throne of Great Britain, for which so many valiant people have died without result."

Philip clapped his hands with enthusiasm, Louis XIV., more reflective, turned towards the Comte de la Fère.

"Is this true," said he, "in all its details?"

"Absolutely true, sire."

"That one of my gentlemen knew the secret of the million, and kept it?"

"Yes, sire?"

"The name of that gentleman?"

"It was your humble servant," said Athos, simply, and bowing.

A murmur of admiration made the heart of Athos swell with pleasure. He had reason to be proud, at least. Mazarin, himself, had raised his arms towards heaven.

"Monsieur," said the king, "I will seek, I will find means to reward you." Athos made a movement. "Oh, not for your probity, to be paid for that would humiliate you; but I owe you a reward for having participated in the restoration of my brother, King Charles II."

"Certainly," said Mazarin.

"It is the triumph of a good cause which fills the whole house of France with joy," said Anne of Austria.

"I continue," said Louis XIV.: "Is it also true, that a single man penetrated to Monk, in his camp, and carried him off?"

"That man had ten auxiliaries, taken from a very inferior rank."

"And nothing but them?"

"Nothing more."

"And you call him?"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan, formerly lieutenant of the musketeers of your majesty."

Anne of Austria coloured; Mazarin became yellow with shame; Louis XIV. was deeply thoughtful, and a drop of sweat fell from his pale brow. "What men!" murmured he. And, involuntarily he darted a glance at the minister, which would have terrified him, if Mazarin, at the moment, had not concealed his head under his pillow.

"Monsieur," said the young Duc d'Anjou, placing his hand, delicate and white as that of a woman, upon the arm of Athos, "tell that brave man, I beg you, that Monsieur, brother of the king, will, to-morrow, drink his health before five hundred of the best gentlemen of France." And, on finishing these words, the young man, perceiving that his enthusiasm had deranged one of his ruffles, set to work to put it to rights with the greatest care imaginable.

"Let us resume business, sire," interrupted Mazarin, who never was enthusiastic, and who had no ruffles on.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Louis XIV. "Enter upon your communication, monsieur le comte," added he, turning towards Athos.

Athos immediately commenced, and offered in due form the hand of the Princess Henrietta Stuart to the young prince, the king's brother. The conference lasted an hour; after which the doors of the chamber were thrown open to the courtiers, who resumed their places, as if nothing had been kept from them in the occupations of that evening. Athos then found himself again with Raoul, and the father and son were able to clasp hands once more.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### IN WHICH MAZARIN BECOMES PRODIGAL.

WHILST Mazarin was endeavouring to recover from the serious alarm he had just experienced, Athos and Raoul were exchanging a few words in a corner of the apartment. "Well, here you are in Paris, then, Raoul?" said the comte.

"Yes, monsieur, since the return of M. le Prince."

"I cannot converse freely with you here, because we are observed; but I shall return home presently, and shall expect you as soon as your duty permits."

Raoul bowed, and, at that moment, M. le Prince came up to them. The prince had that clear and keen look which distinguishes birds of prey of the noble species: his physiognomy itself presented several distinct traits of this resemblance. It is known, that in the Prince de Condé, the aquiline nose rose out sharply and incisively from a brow slightly retreating, rather low than high, which, according to the railers of the court, a pitiless race, even for genius, constituted rather an eagle's beak than a human nose, in the heir of the illustrious princes of the house of Condé. This penetrating look, this imperious expression of the whole countenance, generally disturbed those to whom the prince spoke, more than either majesty or regular beauty could have done in the conqueror of Rocroy. Besides this, the fire mounted so suddenly to his projecting eyes, that with the prince every sort of animation resembled passion. Now, on account of his rank, everybody at the court respected M. le Prince, and many even, seeing only the man, carried their respect as far as terror. Louis de Condé then advanced towards the Comte de la Fère and Raoul, with the marked intention of being saluted by the one, and of speaking to the other. No man bowed with more reserve, grace than the Comte de la Fère. He disdained to put into a salutation all the shades which a courtier ordinarily borrows from the same colour—the desire to please. Athos knew his own personal value, and bowed to the prince like a man, correcting by something sympathetic and undefinable that which might have appeared offensive to the pride of the highest rank in the inflexibility of his attitude. The prince was about to speak to Raoul. Athos prevented him. "If M. le vicomte de Bragelonne," said he, "were not one of the humble servants of your royal highness, I would beg him to pronounce my name before you—*mon prince*."

"I have the honour to address Monsieur le comte de la Fère," said Condé, instantly.

"My protector," added Raoul, blushing.

"One of the most honourable men in the kingdom," continued the prince; "one of the first gentlemen of France, and of whom I have

heard so much, that I have frequently desired to number him among my friends."

"An honour of which I should be unworthy," replied Athos, "but for the respect and admiration I entertain for your royal highness."

"Monsieur de Bragelonne," said the prince, "is a good officer, who, it is plain, has been to a good school. Ah, monsieur le comte, in your time, generals had soldiers!"

"That is true, monseigneur; but nowadays soldiers have generals."

This compliment, which savoured so little of flattery, made to thrill with joy a man whom already Europe considered a hero, and who might be thought to be satiated with praise.

"I very much regret," continued the prince, "that you should have retired from the service, monsieur le comte; for it is more than probable that the king will soon have a war with Holland or England, and opportunities for distinguishing himself would not be wanting for a man who, like you, knows Great Britain as well as you do France."

"I believe I may say, monseigneur, that I have acted wisely in retiring from the service," said Athos, smiling. "France and Great Britain will henceforward live like two sisters, if I can trust my presentiments."

"Your presentiments?"

"Stop, monseigneur, listen to what is being said yonder, at the table of monsieur le cardinal."

"Where they are playing?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

The cardinal had just raised himself upon one elbow, and made a sign to the king's brother, who went to him. "Monseigneur," said the cardinal, "pick up, if you please, all those gold crowns." And he pointed to the enormous pile of yellow and glittering pieces which the Comte de Guiche had raised by degrees before him, by a surprising run of luck at play.

"For me?" cried the Duc d'Anjou.

"Those fifty thousand crowns; yes, monseigneur, they are yours."

"Do you give them to me?"

"I have been playing on your account, monseigneur," replied the cardinal, getting weaker and weaker, as if this effort of giving money had exhausted all his physical and moral faculties.

"Oh, good heavens!" exclaimed Philip, wild with joy, "what a fortunate day!" And he himself, making a rake of his fingers, drew a part of the sum into his pockets, which he filled, and still full a third remained on the table.

"Chevalier," said Philip to his favourite, the Chevalier de Lorraine, "come hither, Chevalier." The favourite quickly obeyed. "Pocket the rest," said the young prince.

This singular scene was only taken by the persons present as a touching kind of family *fête*. The cardinal assumed the airs of a father with the sons of France, and the two young princes had grown up under his wing. No one then imputed to pride, or even impertinence, as would be done nowadays, this liberality on the part of the first minister. The courtiers were satisfied with envying the prince.—The king turned away his head.

"I never had so much money before," said the young prince, joyously, as he crossed the chamber with his favourite, to go to his carriage. "No, never! What a weight these crowns are!"

"But why has monsieur le cardinal given the money all at once?" asked Monsieur le Prince of the Comte de la Fère. "He must be very ill, the dear cardinal!"

"Yes, monseigneur, very ill, without doubt ; he looks very ill, as your royal highness may perceive."

"Certes ! but he will die of it. A hundred and fifty thousand livres ! Oh, it is incredible ! But why, comte ? Tell me a reason for it ?"

"Patience, monseigneur, I beg of you. Here comes M. le Duc d'Anjou, talking with the Chevalier de Lorraine ; I should not be surprised if they spared us the trouble of being indiscreet. Listen to them."

In fact, the chevalier said to the prince in a low voice, "Monseigneur is not natural for M. Mazarin to give you so much money. Take care ! you will let some of the pieces fall, monseigneur. What design has the cardinal upon you, to make him so generous ?"

"As I said," whispered Athos in the prince's ear ; "that perhaps, is the best reply to your question."

"Tell me, monseigneur," reiterated the chevalier impatiently, as he was calculating, by weighing them in his pocket, the quarter of the sum which had fallen to his share by rebound.

"My dear chevalier, a nuptial present."

"How, a nuptial present !"

"Eh ! yes, I am going to be married !" replied the Duc d'Anjou, without perceiving, at the moment he was passing, the prince and Athos, who both bowed respectfully.

The chevalier darted at the young duke a glance so strange and so malicious, that the Comte de la Fère quite started at beholding it.

"You ! you be married !" repeated he ; "oh ! that's impossible.—You would not commit such a folly !"

"Bah ! I don't do it myself ; I am made to do it," replied the Duc d'Anjou. "But come, quick ! let us get rid of our money." Thereupon he disappeared with his companion, laughing and talking, whilst all heads were bowed on his passage.

"Then," whispered the prince to Athos, "that is the secret."

"It was not I that told you so, monseigneur."

"He is to marry the sister of Charles II. ?"

"I believe so."

The prince reflected for a moment, and his eye shot forth one of its not unfrequent flashes. "Humph !" said he slowly, as if speaking to himself ; "once more our swords are to be hung on the wall—for a long time !" and he sighed.

All which that sigh contained of ambition silently stifled, of illusions extinguished and hopes disappointed, Athos alone divined, for he alone had heard that sigh. Immediately after, the prince took leave and the king left the apartment. Athos, by a sign made to Bragelonne, renewed the desire he had expressed at the commencement of the scene. By degrees the chamber was deserted, and Mazarin was left alone, a prey to sufferings which he could no longer dissemble. "Bernouin ! Bernouin !" cried he, in a broken voice.

"What does monseigneur want ?"

"Guénaud—let Guénaud be sent for," said his eminence. "I think I am dying."

Bernouin, in great terror, rushed into the cabinet to give the order, and the *piqueur*, who hastened to fetch the physician, passed the king's carriage in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## GUÉNAUD.

THE order of the cardinal was pressing ; Guénaud quickly obeyed it. He found his patient stretched upon his bed, his legs swelled, livid, and his stomach collapsed. Mazarin had just undergone a severe attack of gout. He suffered cruelly, and with the impatience of a man who has not been accustomed to resistances. On the arrival of Guénaud : " Ah ! " said he, " now I am saved ! "

Guénaud was a very learned and circumspect man, who stood in no need of the critiques of Boileau to obtain a reputation. When in face of a disease, if it were personified in a king, he treated the patient as a Turk or Moor. He did not therefore reply to Mazarin as the minister expected : " Here is the doctor ; good-bye, disease. " On the contrary, on examining his patient, with a very serious air :

" Oh ! oh ! " said he.

" Eh ! what ! Guénaud ! How you look ! "

" I look as I ought to do on seeing your complaint, monseigneur ; it is a very dangerous one. "

" The gout—Oh ! yes, the gout. "

" With complications, monseigneur. "

Mazarin raised himself upon his elbow, and, questioning by look and gesture : " What do you mean by that ? Am I worse than I believe myself to be ? "

" Monseigneur, " said Guénaud, seating himself by the bed, " your eminence has worked very hard during your life ; your eminence has suffered much. "

" But I am not old, I fancy.—The late M. de Richelieu was but seventeen months younger than I am, when he died—and died of a mortal disease. I am young, Guénaud ; remember I am scarcely fifty-two. "

" Oh ! monseigneur, you are much more than that.—How long did the Fronde last ? "

" For what purpose do you put such a question to me ? "

" For a medical calculation, monseigneur. "

" Well ! some ten years—off and on. "

" Very well ; be kind enough to reckon every year of the Fronde as three years—that makes thirty ; now twenty and fifty-two make seventy-two years. You are seventy-two, monseigneur ! and that is a great age. "

Whilst saying this, he felt the pulse of his patient. This pulse was filled with such fatal prognostics, that the physician continued, notwithstanding the interruptions of the patient :—" Put down the years of the Fronde at four each, and you have lived eighty-two years. "

" Are you speaking seriously, Guénaud ? "

" Alas ! yes, monseigneur. "

" You take a roundabout way, then, to announce to me that I am very ill ? "

" *Ma foi !* yes, monseigneur, and with a man of the mind and courage of your eminence, it ought not to be necessary to do so. "

The cardinal breathed with such difficulty that he inspired pity even in a pitiless physician. " There are diseases and diseases, " resumed Mazarin.

" From some of them people escape. "

" That is true, monseigneur. "

" Is it not ? " cried Mazarin, almost joyously ; " for, in short, what else

would be the use of power, of strength, of will? Of what use would genius be—your genius, Guénaud? Of what use would be science and art, if the patient, who disposes of all that, cannot be saved from peril?"

Guénaud was about to open his mouth, but Mazarin continued.

"Remember," said he, "I am the most confiding of your patients; remember I obey you blindly, and that consequently——"

"I know all that," said Guénaud.

"I shall be cured, then?"

"Monseigneur, there is neither strength of will, nor power, nor genius, nor science that can resist a disease which God doubtless sends, or which he cast upon the earth at the creation, with full power to destroy and kill mankind. When the disease is mortal, it kills, and nothing can——"

"Is—my—disease—mortal?" asked Mazarin.

"Yes, monseigneur."

His eminence sunk down for a moment, like an unfortunate wretch who is crushed by a falling column. But the spirit of Mazarin was a strong one, or rather his mind was a firm one. "Guénaud," said he, recovering from the first shock, "you will permit me to appeal from your judgment. I will call together the most learned men of Europe; I will consult them. I will live, in short, by the virtue of I care not what remedy."

"Monseigneur must not suppose," said Guénaud, "that I have the presumption to pronounce alone upon an existence so valuable as yours. I have already assembled all the good physicians and practitioners of France and Europe. There were twelve of them."

"And they said——"

"They said that your eminence was attacked with a mortal disease; I have the consultation signed in my portfolio. If your eminence will please to see it, you will find the names of all the incurable diseases we have met with. There is first——"

"No, no!" cried Mazarin, pushing away the paper. "No, no, Guénaud, I yield! I yield!" And a profound silence, during which the cardinal resumed his senses and recovered his strength, succeeded to the agitation of this scene. "There is another thing," murmured Mazarin; "there are empirics and charlatans. In my country, those whom physicians abandon, run the chance of a vendor of orvietan, which ten times kills them, but a hundred times saves them."

"Has not your eminence observed, that during the last month I have altered my remedies ten times?"

"Yes.—Well?"

"Well, I have spent fifty thousand livres in purchasing the secrets of all these fellows: the list is exhausted, and so is my purse. You are not cured; and, but for my art, you would be dead."

"That ends it!" murmured the cardinal; "that ends it——" And he threw a melancholy look upon the riches which surrounded him. "And must I quit all that?" sighed he. "I am dying, Guénaud! I am dying!"

"Oh! not yet, monseigneur," said the physician.

Mazarin seized his hand. "In what time?" asked he, fixing his two large eyes upon the impassible countenance of the physician.

"Monseigneur, we never tell that."

"To ordinary men, perhaps not;—but to me—to me, whose every min is worth a treasure. Tell me, Guénaud, tell me!"

"No, no, monseigneur."

"I insist upon it, I tell you. Oh ! give me a month, and for every one of those thirty days I will pay you a hundred thousand livres."

"Monseigneur," replied Guénaud, in a firm voice, "it is God who can give you days of grace, and not I. God only allows you a fortnight."

The cardinal breathed a painful sigh, and sunk back upon his pillow, murmuring, "Thank you, Guénaud, thank you !"

The physician was about to depart ; the dying man raising himself up : "Silence !" said he, with eyes of flame, "silence !"

"Monseigneur, I have known this secret two months ; you see that I have kept it faithfully."

"Go, Guénaud ; I will take care of your fortunes ; go, and tell Brienne to send me a clerk called M. Colbert. Go !"

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### COLBERT.

COLBERT was not far off. During the whole evening he had remained in one of the corridors, chatting with Bernouin and Brienne, and commenting, with the ordinary skill of people of a court, upon the views which developed themselves, like air-bubbles upon the water, on the surface of each event. It is doubtless time to trace, in a few words, one of the most interesting portraits of the age, and to trace it with as much truth, perhaps, as contemporary painters have been able to do. Colbert was a man in whom the historian and the moralist have an equal right. He was thirteen years older than Louis XIV., his future master. Of middle height, rather thin than otherwise, he had deep-set eyes, a mean appearance, coarse black and thin hair, which, say the biographers of his time, made him take early to the *calotte*. A look full of severity, of harshness even, a sort of stiffness, which, with inferiors, was pride, with superiors, an affectation of superior virtue ; a surly cast of countenance upon all occasions, even when looking at himself in a glass alone—such is the exterior of the personage. As to the moral part of his character, the depth of his talent for accounts, and his ingenuity in making sterility itself productive, were much boasted of. Colbert had formed the idea of forcing governors of frontier places to feed the garrisons without pay, with what they drew from contributions. Such a valuable quality made Mazarin think of replacing Joubert, his intendant, who was recently dead, by M. Colbert, who had such skill in nibbling down allowances. Colbert by degrees crept into the court, notwithstanding the meanness of his birth, for he was the son of a man who sold wine as his father had done, but who afterwards sold cloth, and then silk stuffs. Colbert, destined for trade, had been a clerk to a merchant at Lyons, whom he had quitted to come to Paris in the office of a Châtelet procureur named Biterne. It was here he had learnt the art of drawing up an account, and the much more valuable one of complicating it. This stiffness of Colbert's had been of great benefit to him ; so true is it that Fortune, when she has a caprice, resembles those women of antiquity, whose fantasy nothing physical or moral, in either things or men, disgusted. Colbert, placed with Michel Letellier, secretary of state in 1648, by his cousin Colbert, seigneur de Saint-Penange, who favoured him, received one day from the minister a commission for Cardinal Mazarin. His eminence was then in the enjoyment of flourishing health, and the bad years of the Fronde had not yet counted triple and quadruple for him. He was at Sedan, very much annoyed at a court intrigue in which Anne

of Austria appeared to wish to desert his cause. Of this intrigue Letellier held the thread. He had just received a letter from Anne of Austria, a letter very valuable to him, and strongly compromising Mazarin ; but, as he already played the double part which served him so well, and by which he always managed two enemies so as to draw advantage from both, either by embroiling them more and more or by reconciling them, Michel Letellier wished to send Anne of Austria's letter to Mazarin, in order that he might be acquainted with it, and consequently would be pleased with his having rendered him a service so willingly. To send the letter was an easy matter ; to recover it again, after having communicated it, that was the difficulty. Letellier cast his eyes around him, and seeing the black and meagre clerk scribbling away with his scowling brow, in his office, he preferred him to the best gendarme for the execution of this design.

Colbert was commanded to set out for Sedan, with positive orders to carry the letter to Mazarin, and bring it back to Letellier. He listened to his orders with scrupulous attention, required it to be repeated to him twice, and was particular in learning whether the bringing back was as necessary as the communicating, and Letellier replied sternly, "More necessary." Then he set out, travelled like a courier, without any care for his body, and placed in the hands of Mazarin, first a letter from Letellier, which announced to the cardinal the sending of the precious letter, and then that letter itself. Mazarin coloured greatly whilst reading Anne of Austria's letter, gave Colbert a gracious smile, and dismissed him.

"When shall I have the answer, monseigneur?"

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow morning?"

"Yes, monsieur."

The clerk turned upon his heel, after sporting his very best bow. The next day he was at his post at seven o'clock. Mazarin made him wait till ten. He remained patiently in the antechamber ; his turn being come, he entered. Mazarin gave him a sealed packet. Upon the envelope of this packet were these words :—A Monsieur Michel Letellier, &c. Colbert looked at the packet with much attention ; the cardinal put on a pleasant countenance, and pushed him towards the door.

"And the letter of the queen-mother, monseigneur?" asked Colbert.

"It is with the rest in the packet," said Mazarin.

"Oh ! very well," replied Colbert ; and placing his hat between his knees, he began to unseal the packet.

Mazarin uttered a cry. "What are you doing?" said he angrily.

"I am unsealing the packet, monseigneur."

"You mistrust me, then, master *cuistre*, do you ? Did any one ever see such impertinence?"

"Oh ! monseigneur, do not be angry with me ? It is certainly not your eminence's word I place in doubt, God forbid !"

"What then?"

"It is the carefulness of your chancery, monseigneur. What is a letter? A rag. May not a rag be forgotten? And, look, monseigneur, look if I was not right. Your clerks have forgotten the rag ; the letter is not in the packet."

"You are an insolent fellow, and you have not looked," cried Mazarin, very angrily ; "begone and wait my pleasure." Whilst saying these words, with subtlety perfectly Italian, he snatched the packet from the hands of Colbert, and re-entered his apartments.

But this anger could not last so long as not to be replaced in time by

reason. Mazarin, every morning, on opening his closet door, found the figure of Colbert as a sentinel behind the bench, and this disagreeable figure never failed to ask him humbly, but with tenacity, for the queen-mother's letter. Mazarin could hold out no longer, and was obliged to give it up. He accompanied this restitution with a most severe reprimand, during which Colbert contented himself with examining, feeling, even smelling, as it were, the papers, the characters, and the signature, neither more nor less than if he had had to do with the greatest forger in the kingdom. Mazarin behaved more rudely still to him, but Colbert, still impassible, having obtained a certainty that the letter was the true one, went off as if he had been deaf. This conduct afterwards was worth the post of Joubert to him ; for Mazarin, instead of bearing malice, admired him, and was desirous of attaching so much fidelity to himself.

It may be judged, by this single anecdote, what the character of Colbert was. Events, developing themselves, by degrees allowed all the powers of his friend to act freely. Colbert was not long in insinuating himself into the good graces of the cardinal : he became even indispensable to him. The clerk was acquainted with all his accounts, without the cardinal's ever having spoken to him about them. This secret between them was a powerful tie, and this was why, when about to appear before the Master of another world, Mazarin was desirous of taking good counsel in disposing of the wealth he was so unwillingly obliged to leave in this world. After the visit of Guénaud, he therefore sent for Colbert, desired him to sit down, and said to him : " Let us converse, Monsieur Colbert, and seriously, for I am very sick, and I may chance to die."

" Man is mortal," replied Colbert.

" I have always remembered that, M. Colbert, and I have worked in that prevision. You know that I have amassed a little wealth."

" I know you have, monseigneur."

" At how much do you estimate, as near as you can, the amount of this wealth, M. Colbert ?"

" At forty millions, five hundred and sixty thousand, two hundred livres, nine sous, eight deniers," replied Colbert.

The cardinal fetched a deep sigh, and looked at Colbert with wonder ; but he allowed a smile to steal across his lips.

" Property known," added Colbert, in reply to that smile.

The cardinal made quite a start in his bed. " What do you mean by that ?" said he.

" I mean," said Colbert, " that besides those forty millions, five hundred and sixty thousand, two hundred livres, nine sous, eight deniers, there are thirteen millions that are not known of."

" *Ouf !*" sighed Mazarin, " what a man !"

At this moment the head of Bernouin appeared through the embrasure of the door.

" What is it ?" asked Mazarin, " and why do you disturb me ?"

" The Theatin father, your eminence's director, was sent for this evening ; and he cannot come again to monseigneur till after to-morrow."

Mazarin looked at Colbert, who arose and took his hat, saying : " I will come again, monseigneur."

Mazarin hesitated. " No, no," said he ; " I have as much business to transact with you as with him. Besides, you are my other confessor—and what I have to say to one, the other may hear. Remain where you are, Colbert."

" But, monseigneur, if there be a secret of penitence, will the director consent to my being here ?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that, come into the *ruelle*."

"I can wait outside, monseigneur."

"No, no, it will do you good to hear the confession of a rich man."

Colbert bowed, and went into the *ruelle*.

"Introduce the Theatin father," said Mazarin, closing the curtains.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### CONFESSION OF A MAN OF WEALTH.

THE Theatin entered deliberately, without being too much astonished at the noise and agitation which anxiety for the health of the cardinal had raised in his household. "Come in, my reverend father," said Mazarin, after a last look at the *ruelle*, "come in, and console me."

"That is my duty, monseigneur," replied the Theatin.

"Commence by sitting down, and making yourself comfortable, for I am going to begin by a general confession ; you will afterwards give me a good absolution, and I shall believe myself more tranquil."

"Monseigneur," said the father, "you are not so ill as to make a general confession urgent—and it will be very fatiguing—take care."

"You suspect, then, that it may be long, father?"

"How can I think it otherwise, when a man has lived so completely as your eminence has done."

"Ah ; that is true !—yes—the recital may be long."

"The mercy of God is great !" snuffed the Theatin.

"Stop," said Mazarin, "there I begin to terrify myself with having allowed so many things to pass which the Lord might reprove."

"Is not that always so?" said the Theatin, naively, removing further from the lamp his thin pointed face, like that of a mole. "Sinners are so : forgetful beforehand, and scrupulous when it is too late."

"Sinners?" replied Mazarin. "Do you use that word ironically, and to reproach me with all the genealogies I have allowed to be made on my account—I—the son of a fisherman, in fact."\*

"Hum !" said the Theatin.

"That is a first sin, father ; for I have allowed myself to be made to be descended from two old Roman consuls, S. Geganius Macerinus 1st, Macerinus 2nd, and Proculus Macerinus 3rd, of whom the Chronicle of Haolander speaks. From Macerinus to Mazarin the proximity was tempting. Macerinus, a diminutive, means leanish, poorish, out of case. Oh ! reverend father ! Mazarini may now be carried to the augmentative *Maigre*, thin as Lazarus. Look !"—and he showed his fleshless arms.

"In your having been born of a family of fishermen (*pêcheurs*) I see nothing injurious to you ; for—St. Peter was a fisherman ; and if you are a prince of the church, monseigneur, he was the supreme head of it. Pass on, if you please."

"So much the more for my having threatened with the Bastille a certain Bounet, a priest of Avignon, who wanted to publish a genealogy of the Casa Mazarini much too marvellous."

"To be probable?" replied the Theatin.

"Oh ! if I had acted up to his idea, father, that would have been the vice of pride,—another sin."

\* This is quite untranslatable—it being a play upon the words *pêcheur*, a sinner, and *pêcheur*, a fisherman. It is in very bad taste.—TRANS.

"It was excess of wit, and a person is not to be reproached with such sorts of abuses. Pass on, pass on!"

"I was all pride. Look you, father, I will endeavour to divide that from capital sins."

"I like divisions, when well made."

"I am glad of that. You must know that in 1630—alas! that is thirty-one years ago!"

"You were then twenty-nine years old, monseigneur."

"A hot-headed age. I was then something of a soldier, and I threw myself at Casal into the arquebusades, to show that I rode on horseback as well as an officer. It is true, I restored peace between the French and the Spaniards. That redeems my sin a little."

"I see no sin in being able to ride well on horseback," said the Theatin; "that is in perfect good taste, and does honour to our gown. In my quality of a Christian, I approve of your having prevented the effusion of blood; in my quality of a monk, I am proud of the bravery a monk has exhibited."

Mazarin bowed his head humbly. "Yes," said he, "but the consequences?"

"What consequences?"

"Eh! that damned sin of pride has roots without end. From the time that I threw myself in that manner between two armies, that I had smelt powder and faced lines of soldiers, I have held generals a little in contempt."

"Ah!" said the father.

"There is the evil; so that I have not thought one supportable since that time."

"The fact is," said the Theatin, "that the generals we have had have not been remarkable."

"Oh!" cried Mazarin, "there was monsieur le prince. I have tormented him thoroughly."

"He is not much to be pitied; he has acquired sufficient glory, and sufficient wealth."

"That may be, for monsieur le prince; but M. Beaufort, for example—whom I made suffer so long in the dungeons of Vincennes?"

"Ah! but he was a rebel, and the safety of the state required that you should make a sacrifice.—Pass on?"

"I believe I have exhausted pride. There is another sin which I am afraid to qualify."

"I will qualify it myself.—Tell it."

"A great sin, reverend father!"

"We shall judge, monseigneur."

"You cannot fail to have heard of certain relations which I have had—with her majesty the queen-mother—the malevolent——"

"The malevolent, monseigneur, are fools.—Was it not necessary, for the good of the state and the interests of the young king, that you should live in good intelligence with the queen?—Pass on, pass on!"

"I assure you," said Mazarin, "you remove a terrible weight from my breast."

"These are all trifles!—Look for something serious."

"I have had much ambition, father."

"That is the march of great minds and things, monseigneur."

"Even that trifle of the tiara?"

"To be pope is to be the first of Christians.—Why should you not desire that?"

"It has been printed that, to gain that object, I had sold Cambrai to the Spaniards."

"You have, perhaps, yourself written pamphlets without too much persecuting pamphleteers."

"Then, reverend father, I have truly a clean breast. I feel nothing remaining but slight peccadilloes."

"What are they?"—"Play."

"That is rather mundane; but you were obliged by the duties of greatness to keep a good house."

"I like to win."

"No player plays to lose."

"I cheated a little."

"You took your advantage.—Pass on."

"Well! reverend father, I feel nothing else upon my conscience. Give me absolution, and my soul will be able, when God shall please to call it, to mount without obstacle to the throne——"

The Theatin moved neither his arms nor his lips. "What are you waiting for, father?" said Mazarin.

"I am waiting for the end."

"The end of what?"

"Of the confession, monseigneur."

"But I have ended."

"Oh, no; your eminence is mistaken."

"Not that I know of."

"Search diligently."

"I have searched as well as possible."

"Then I will assist your memory."—"Do."

The Theatin coughed several times. "You have said nothing of avarice, another capital sin, nor of those millions," said he.

"Of what millions, father?"

"Why of those you possess, monseigneur."

"Father, that money is mine, why should I speak to you about that?"

"Because, see you, our opinions differ. You say that money is yours, whilst I, I believe it is rather the property of others."

Mazarin lifted his cold hand to his brow, which was dewed with sweat. "How so?" stammered he.

"This way. Your excellency has gained much wealth—in the service of the king."

"Hum! much—that is not too much."

"Whatever it may be, whence came that wealth?"

"From the state."

"The state, that is the king."

"But what do you conclude from that, father?" said Mazarin, who began to tremble.

"I cannot conclude without seeing a list of the riches you possess. Let us reckon a little, if you please. You have the bishopric of Metz?"—"Yes."

"The abbey of St. Clement, St. Arnould, and St. Vincent, all at Metz?"—"Yes."

"You have the abbey of St. Denis, in France,—a magnificent property?"

"Yes, father."

"You have the abbey of Cluny, which is rich?"—"I have."

"That of St. Midaré, at Soissons, with a revenue of a hundred thousand livres?"—"I cannot deny it."

"That of St. Victor, at Marseilles,—one of the best in the south?"

"Yes, father."

"A good million a year. With the emoluments of the cardinalship and the ministry, I say too little when I say two millions a year."

"Eh!"

"In ten years that is twenty millions,—and twenty millions placed out at fifty per cent. give, by progression, twenty-three millions in ten years."

"How well you reckon for a Theatin."

"Since your eminence placed our order in the convent we occupy, near St. Germain des Prés, in 1641, I have kept the accounts of the society."

"And mine likewise, apparently, father."

"One ought to know a little of everything, monseigneur."

"Very well. Conclude at present."

"I conclude that your baggage is too heavy to allow you to pass through the gates of Paradise."

"Shall I be damned?"

"If you do not make restitution, yes."

Mazarin uttered a piteous cry. "Restitution!—but to whom, good God?"

"To the owner of that money,—to the king."

"But the king did not give it me all."

"A moment—does not the king sign the ordonnances?"

Mazarin passed from sighs to groans. "Absolution! absolution!" cried he.

"Impossible, monseigneur. Restitution! restitution!" replied the Theatin.

"But you absolve me from all other sins, why not from that?"

"Because," replied the father, "to absolve you for that motive would be a sin for which the king would never absolve me, monseigneur."

Thereupon the confessor quitted his penitent with an air full of compunction. He then went out in the same manner as he had entered.

"Oh, good God!" groaned the cardinal. "Come here, Colbert; I am very, very ill indeed, my friend."

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE DONATION.

COLBERT reappeared beneath the curtains.

"Have you heard?" said Mazarin.

"Alas! yes, monseigneur."

"Can he be right? Can all this money be badly acquired?"

"A Theatin, monseigneur, is a bad judge in matters of finance," replied Colbert, coolly. "And yet it is very possible that, according to his theological ideas, your eminence has been, in a certain degree, wrong. People generally find they have been so,—when they die."

"In the first place, they commit the wrong of dying, Colbert."

"That is true, monseigneur. Against whom, however, did the Theatin make out that you had committed these wrongs? Against the king?"

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders. "As if I had not saved both his state and its finances."

"That admits of no contradiction, monseigneur."

"Does it? Then I have received a merely legitimate salary, in spite of the opinion of my confessor?"

"That is beyond doubt."

"And I might fairly keep for my own family, which is so needy, a good fortune,—the whole even of what I have gained?"

"I see no impediment to that, monseigneur."

"I felt assured that in consulting you, Colbert, I should have sage advice," replied Mazarin, greatly delighted.

Colbert assumed his pedantic look. "Monseigneur," interrupted he, "I think it would be quite as well to examine whether what the Theatin said is not a *snare*."

"Oh! no; a snare? What for? The Theatin is an honest man."

"He believed your eminence to be at the gates of the tomb, because your eminence consulted him. Did not I hear him say,—'Distinguish that which the king has given you from that which you have given yourself.' Recollect, monseigneur, if he did not say something a little like that to you?—that is quite a theatrical speech."

"That is possible."

"In which case, monseigneur, I should consider you as required by the Theatin to——"

"To make restitution!" cried Mazarin, with great warmth.

"Eh! I do not say no."

"What, of all! you do not dream of such a thing! You speak just as the confessor did."

"To make restitution of a part,—that is to say, his majesty's part; and that, monseigneur, may have its dangers. Your eminence is too skilful a politician not to know that, at this moment, the king does not possess a hundred and fifty thousand livres clear in his coffers."

"That is not my affair," said Mazarin, triumphantly; "that belongs to M. le Surintendant Fouquet, whose accounts I have given you to verify for months past."

Colbert bit his lips at the name only of Fouquet. "His majesty," said he, between his teeth, "has no money but that which M. Fouquet collects; your money, monseigneur, would afford him a delicious banquet."

"Well, but I am not the *surintendant* of his majesty's finances—I have my purse—certainly, I would do much for his majesty's welfare—some legacy—but I cannot disappoint my family."

"The legacy of a part would dishonour you and offend the king. Leaving a part to his majesty, is to avow that that part has inspired you with doubts as not being acquired legitimately."

"Monsieur Colbert!"

"I thought your eminence did me the honour to ask my advice?"

"Yes, but you are ignorant of the principal details of the question."

"I am ignorant of nothing, monseigneur; during ten years, all the columns of figures which are found in France, have passed in review before me; and if I have painfully nailed them into my brain; they are there now so well riveted, that, from the office of M. Letellier, which is sober, to the little secret largesses of M. Fouquet, who is prodigal, I could recite, figure by figure, all the money that is spent in France, from Mar-seilles to Cherbourg."

"Then, you would have me throw all my money into the coffers of the king?" cried Mazarin, ironically; and from whom at the same time, the gout forced painful moans. "Certain, the king would reproach me with nothing, but he would laugh at me, while squandering my millions, and with reason."

"Your eminence has misunderstood me. I did not, the least in the world, pretend that his majesty ought to spend your money."

"You said so, clearly, it seems to me, when you advised me to give it to him."

"Ah !" replied Colbert, "that is because your eminence, absorbed as you are by your disease, entirely loses sight of the character of Louis XIV."

"How so?"

"That character, if I may venture to express myself thus, resembles that which monseigneur confessed just now to the Theatin."

"Go on—that is?"

"Pride ! Pardon me, monseigneur, haughtiness, nobleness ; kings have no pride, that is a human passion."

"Pride, yes, you are right—next?"

"Well, monseigneur, if I have divined rightly, your eminence has but to give all your money to the king, and that immediately."

"But what for," said Mazarin, quite bewildered.

"Because the king will not accept of the whole."

"What, and he a young man, and devoured by ambition?"

"Just so."

"A young man who is anxious for my death !" —— "Monseigneur !"

"To inherit, yes, Colbert, yes ; he is anxious for my death in order to inherit. Triple fool that I am ! I would prevent him !"

"Exactly ; if the donation were made in a certain form, he would refuse it."

"Well ; but how?"

"That is plain enough. A young man who has yet done nothing—who burns to distinguish himself—who burns to reign alone, will never take anything ready built, he will construct for himself. This prince, monseigneur, will never be content with the Palais Royal, which M. de Richelieu left him, nor with the Palais Mazarin which you have caused to be so superbly constructed, nor with the Louvre, which his ancestors inhabited ; nor with St. Germain, where he was born. All that does not proceed from himself, I predict he will disdain."

"And you will guarantee, that if I give my forty millions to the king——"

"Saying certain things to him at the same time, I guarantee he will refuse them."

"But those things—what are they?"

"I will write them, if monseigneur will have the goodness to dictate them."

"Well, but, after all, what advantage will that be to me?"

"An enormous one. Nobody will afterwards be able to accuse your eminence of that unjust avarice with which pamphleteers have reproached the most brilliant mind of the present age."

"You are right, Colbert, you are right ; go, and seek the king, on my part, and carry him my will."

"Your donation, monseigneur."

"But, if he should accept it ; if he should even think of accepting it."

"Then there would remain thirteen millions for your family, and that is a good round sum."

"But then *you* would be either a fool or a traitor."

"And I am neither the one nor the other, monseigneur. You appear to be much afraid the king will accept ; you have a deal more reason to fear that he will not accept."

"But, see you, if he does not accept, I should like to guarantee my thirteen reserved millions to him—yes, I will do so—yes. But my pains are returning, I shall faint. I am very, very ill, Colbert ; I am very near my end !"

Colbert started. The cardinal was indeed very ill; large drops of sweat flowed down upon his bed of agony, and the frightful paleness of a face streaming with water, was a spectacle which the most hardened practitioner could not have beheld without compassion. Colbert was, without doubt, very much affected, for he quitted the chamber, calling Bernouin to attend the dying man, and went into the corridor. There, walking about with a meditative expression, which almost gave nobleness to his vulgar head, his shoulders thrown up, his neck stretched out, his lips half-open, to give vent to unconnected fragments of incoherent thoughts, he lashed up his courage to the pitch of the undertaking contemplated, whilst within ten paces of him, separated only by a wall, his master was being stifled by anguish, which drew from him lamentable cries, thinking no more of the treasures of the earth, or of the joys of Paradise, but much of all the horrors of hell. Whilst burning-hot napkins, topicals, revulsives, and Guénaud, who was recalled, were performing their functions with increased activity, Colbert, holding his great head in both his hands, to compress within it the fever of the projects engendered by the brain, was meditating the tenor of the donation he would make Mazarin write, at the first hour of respite his disease should afford him. It would appear as if all the cries of the cardinal, and all the attacks of death upon this representative of the past, were stimulants for the genius of this thinker with the bushy eye-brows, who was turning already towards the rising of the new sun of a regenerated society. Colbert resumed his place at Mazarin's pillow at the first interval of pain, and persuaded him to dictate a donation thus conceived.

"About to appear before God, the Master of mankind, I beg the king, who was my master on earth, to resume the wealth which his bounty has bestowed upon me, and which my family would be happy to see pass into such illustrious hands. The particulars of my property will be found—they are drawn up—at the first requisition of his majesty, or at the last sigh of his most devoted servant.

"JULES, Cardinal de Mazarin."

The cardinal sighed heavily as he signed this; Colbert sealed the packet, and carried it immediately to the Louvre, whither the king had returned.

He then went back to his own home, rubbing his hands with the confidence of a workman who has done a good day's work.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

HOW ANNE OF AUSTRIA GAVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO LOUIS XIV.,  
AND HOW M. FOUQUET GAVE HIM ANOTHER.

THE news of the extremity into which the cardinal had fallen had already spread, and attracted at least as much attention among the people of the Louvre as the news of the marriage of Monsieur, the king's brother, which had already been announced as an official fact. Scarcely had Louis XIV. returned home, with his thoughts fully occupied with the various things he had seen and heard in the course of the evening, when an usher announced that the same crowd of courtiers, who, in the morning, had thronged his *lever*, presented themselves again at his *coucher*, a remarkable piece of respect which, during the reign of the cardinal, the court, not very discreet in its preferences, had accorded to the minister without caring about displeasing the king.

But the minister had had, as we have said, an alarming attack of gout, and the tide of flattery was mounting towards the throne. Courtiers have a marvellous instinct in scenting events beforehand ; courtiers possess a supreme kind of science ; they are diplomatists to throw a light upon the unravelling of difficult circumstances, captains to divine the issue of battles, and physicians to cure the sick. Louis XIV., to whom his mother had taught this axiom, among many others, understood at once that monsieur le cardinal must be very ill. Scarcely had Anne of Austria conducted the young queen to her apartments and relieved her brows of the head-dress of ceremony, when she went to seek her son in his cabinet, where, alone, melancholy, and depressed, he was indulging, as if to exercise his will, in one of those terrible inward passions—kings' passions—which create events when they break out, and which, with Louis XIV., thanks to his astonishing command over himself, became such benign tempests, that his most violent, his only passion, that which F. Simon mentions with astonishment, was that famous passion of anger which he exhibited fifty years later, on the occasion of a little concealment of the Duc de Maine's, and which had for result a shower of blows inflicted with a cane upon the back of a poor valet who had stolen a biscuit. The young king then was, as we have seen, a prey to a double excitement ; and he said to himself, as he looked in a glass, "O king !—king by name, and not in fact ;—phantom, vain phantom as thou art !—inert statue, which has no other power than that of provoking salutations from courtiers, when wilt thou be able to raise thy velvet arm, or clench thy silken hand ? when wilt thou be able to open for any purpose but to sigh or smile, lips condemned to the motionless stupidity of the marbles of thy gallery ?"

Then, passing his hand over his brow, and feeling the want of air, he approached a window, whence he saw below some cavaliers talking together, and groups of the timidly curious. These cavaliers were a fraction of the watch ; the groups were busy portions of the people, to whom a king is always a curious thing, as a rhinoceros, a crocodile, or a serpent is. He struck his brow with his open hand, crying,—"King of France ! what a title ! People of France ! what a heap of creatures ! I have just returned to my Louvre ; my horses, just unharnessed, are still smoking, and I have created interest enough to induce scarcely twenty persons to look at me as I passed. Twenty ! what do I say ? no ; there were not twenty anxious to see the king of France. There are not even ten archers to guard my place of residence ; archers, people, guards, all are at the Palais Royal ! Why, my good God ! have not I, the king, the right to ask of you all that ?"

"Because," said a voice, replying to his, and which sounded from the other side of the door of the cabinet, "because at the Palais Royal there is all the gold,—that is to say, all the power of him who desires to reign."

Louis turned sharply round. The voice which had pronounced these words was that of Anne of Austria. The king started, and advanced towards her. "I hope," said he, "your majesty has paid no attention to the vain declamations with which the solitude and disgust familiar to kings, give the idea to the happiest characters ?"

"I only paid attention to one thing, my son, and that was that you were complaining."

"Who ! I ? Not at all," said Louis XIV. ; "no, in truth, you mistake, madame."

"What were you doing then ?"

"I thought I was under the ferule of my professor, and was developing a subject of amplification."

"My son," replied Anne of Austria, shaking her head, "you are wrong not to trust to my word ; you are wrong not to grant me your confidence. A day will come, perhaps quickly, wherein you will have occasion to remember that axiom :—Gold is universal power ; and they alone are kings who are all powerful."

"Your intention," continued the king, "was not, however, to cast blame upon the rich of this age, was it?"

"No," said the queen, warmly ; "no sire ; they who are rich in this age, under your reign, are rich because you have been willing they should be so ; and I entertain for them neither malice nor envy ; they have, without doubt, served your majesty sufficiently well for your majesty to have permitted them to reward themselves. That is what I mean to say by the words for which you reproach me."

"God forbid, madame, that I should ever reproach my mother with anything !"

"Besides," continued Anne of Austria, "the Lord never gives the goods of this world but for a season ; the Lord—as correctives to honour and riches—the Lord has placed sufferings, sickness, and death ; and no one," added she, with a melancholy smile, which proved she made the application of the funeral precept to herself, "no one can take their wealth or their greatness with them into the tomb. It thence results that the young gather the abundant harvest prepared for them by the old."

Louis listened with increased attention to the words which Anne of Austria, no doubt, pronounced with a view of consoling him. "Madame," said he, looking earnestly at his mother, "one would almost, in truth, say you had something else to announce to me."

"I have absolutely nothing, my son ; only you cannot have failed to remark that monsieur le cardinal is very ill."

Louis looked at his mother, expecting some emotion in her voice, some sorrow in her countenance. The face of Anne of Austria was apparently a little changed, but that was from a suffering of quite a personal character. Perhaps the alteration was caused by the cancer which had begun to consume her breast. "Yes, madame," said the king ; "yes, M. de Mazarin is very ill."

"And it would be a great loss to the kingdom if his eminence were to be called away by God. Is not that your opinion as well as mine, my son?" said the queen.

"Yes, madame ; yes, certainly, it would be a great loss for the kingdom," said Louis, colouring ; "but the peril does not seem to me to be so great ; besides, monsieur le cardinal is young yet." The king had scarcely ceased speaking when an usher lifted the tapestry, and stood with a paper in his hand, waiting for the king to interrogate him.

"What have you there?" asked the king.

"A message from M. de Mazarin," replied the usher.

"Give it to me," said the king ; and he took the paper. But at the moment he was about to open it, there was a great noise in the gallery, the antechamber, and the court.

"Ah, ah !" said Louis XIV., who without doubt knew what the triple noise meant. "What did I say, there was but one king in France ! I was mistaken, there are two."

As he spoke or thought thus, the door opened, and the surintendant of the finances, Fouquet, appeared before his nominal master. It was he who

made the noise in the antechamber, it was his horses that made the noise in the court. In addition to all this a loud murmur was heard along his passage, which did not die away till some time after he had passed. It was this murmur which Louis XIV. so much regretted not hearing as he passed, and dying away behind him.

"He is not precisely a king, as you fancy," said Anne of Austria to her son; "he is only a man who is much too rich—that is all."

Whilst saying these words, a bitter feeling gave to the words of the queen a most malicious expression; whereas the brow of the king, calm and self-possessed, on the contrary, was without the slightest wrinkle. He nodded, therefore, familiarly to Fouquet, whilst he continued to unfold the paper given to him by the usher. Fouquet perceived this movement, and with a politeness at once easy and respectful, advanced towards the queen, so as not to disturb the king. Louis had opened the paper, and yet he did not read it. He listened to Fouquet making the most charming compliments to the queen upon her hand and arm. The frown of Anne of Austria relaxed a little, she even almost smiled. Fouquet perceived that the king, instead of reading, was attending to him; he turned half round, therefore, and thus, whilst continuing to be engaged with the queen, faced the king.

"You know, Monsieur Fouquet," said Louis, "how ill M. Mazarin is?"

"Yes, sire, I know that," said Fouquet; "in fact he is very ill. I was at my country house of Vaux when the news reached me; and the affair seemed so pressing that I left at once."

"You left Vaux this evening, monsieur?"

"An hour and a half ago, yes, your majesty," said Fouquet, consulting a watch richly ornamented with diamonds.

"An hour and a half!" said the king, still able to restrain his anger, but not to conceal his astonishment.

"I understand you, sire. Your majesty doubts my word, and you have reason to do so; but I have really come so quickly, though it is wonderful. I have received from England three pairs of very fast horses, as I had been assured. They were placed at distances of four leagues apart, and I have tried them this evening. They really brought me from Vaux to the Louvre in an hour and a half, so your majesty sees I have not been cheated." The queen-mother smiled with something like secret envy. But Fouquet caught her thought. "Thus, madame," he promptly said, "such horses are made for kings, not for subjects; for kings ought never to yield to any one in anything." The king looked up.

"And yet," interrupted Anne of Austria, "you are not a king, that I know of, M. Fouquet."

"Truly not, madame; therefore the horses only wait the orders of his majesty to enter the royal stables; and if I allowed myself to try them, it was only out of the fear of offering to the king anything that was not positively wonderful."

The king became quite red.

"You know, Monsieur Fouquet," said the queen, "that at the court of France it is not the custom for a subject to offer anything to his king."

Louis started.

"I hoped, madame," said Fouquet, much agitated, "that my love for his majesty, my incessant desire to please him, would serve as a counterpoise to that reason of etiquette. It was not, besides, so much a present that I permitted myself to offer, as a tribute I paid."

"Thank you, Monsieur Fouquet," said the king politely, "and I am

gratified by your intention, for I love good horses ; but you know I am not very rich, you, who are my surintendant of finances, know it better than any one else. I am not able then, however willing I may be, to purchase such a valuable set of horses."

Fouquet darted a look of haughtiness at the queen-mother, who appeared to triumph at the false position the minister had got into, and replied :

"Luxury is the virtue of kings, sire ; it is luxury which makes them resemble God ; it is by luxury they are more than other men. With luxury a king nourishes his subjects, and honours them. Under the mild heat of this luxury of kings springs the luxury of individuals, a source of riches for the people. His majesty, by accepting the gift of these six incomparable horses, would have piqued the self-love of the breeders of our country, of Limousin, Perche, and Normandy ; and this emulation would have been beneficial to all. But the king is silent, and consequently I am condemned."

During this speech, Louis was, unconsciously, folding and unfolding Mazarin's paper, upon which he had not cast his eyes. At length he glanced upon it, and uttered a faint cry at reading the first line.

"What is the matter, my son ?" asked the queen anxiously, and going towards the king.

"From the cardinal," replied the king, continuing to read ; "yes, yes, it is really from him."

"Is he worse, then ?"

"Read !" said the king, passing the parchment to his mother, as if he thought that nothing less than reading would convince Anne of Austria of a thing so astonishing as was conveyed in that paper.

Anne of Austria read in her turn, and, as she read, her eyes sparkled with a joy the more lively for her uselessly endeavouring to hide it, which attracted the attention of Fouquet.

"Oh ! a regularly drawn up deed of donation," said she.

"A donation ?" repeated Fouquet.

"Yes," said the king, replying pointedly to the surintendant of finances ; "yes, at the point of death, monsieur le cardinal makes me a donation of all his wealth."

"Forty millions !" cried the queen. "Oh, my son ! this is very noble on the part of monsieur le cardinal, and will silence all malicious rumours ; forty millions scraped together slowly, coming back all in one heap to the treasury ! It is the act of a faithful subject and a good Christian." And having once more cast her eyes over the act, she restored it to Louis XIV., whom the announcement of the sum quite agitated. Fouquet had made some steps backward, and remained silent. The king looked at him, and held the paper out to him, in his turn. The surintendant only bestowed a haughty look of a second upon it ; then bowing,—“Yes, sire,” said he, “a donation, I see.”

"You must reply to it, my son," said Anne of Austria ; "you must reply to it, and that immediately."

"But how, madame ?"

"By a visit to the cardinal."

"Why, it is but an hour since I left his eminence, said the king.

"Write, then, sire."

"Write !" said the young king, with evident repugnance.

"Well !" replied Anne of Austria, "it seems to me, my son, that a man who has just made such a present, has a good right to expect to be thanked

for it with some degree of promptitude." Then turning towards Fouquet, "Is not that likewise your opinion, monsieur?"

"That the present is worth the trouble. Yes, madame," said Fouquet, with a lofty air that did not escape the king.

"Accept, then, and thank him," insisted Anne of Austria.

"What says M. Fouquet?" asked Louis XIV.

"Does your majesty wish to know my opinion?"—"Yes."

"Thank him, sire——"

"Ah !" said the queen.

"But do not accept," continued Fouquet.

"And why not?" asked the queen.

"You have yourself said why, madame," continued Fouquet ; "because kings ought not and cannot receive presents from their subjects."

The king remained mute between these two so opposite opinions.

"But forty millions !" said Anne of Austria, in the same tone as that in which, at a later period, poor Marie Antoinette replied, "You will tell me as much !"

"I know," said Fouquet laughing, "forty millions are a good round sum—such a sum as could almost tempt a royal conscience."

"But, monsieur," said Anne of Austria, "instead of persuading the king not to receive this present, recall to his majesty's mind, you, whose duty it is, that these forty millions are a fortune to him."

"It is precisely, madame, because these forty millions would be a fortune that I will say to the king, 'Sire, if it be not decent for a king to accept from a subject six horses, worth twenty thousand livres, it would be disgraceful for him to owe a fortune to another subject, more or less scrupulous in the choice of the materials which contributed to the building up of that fortune.'"

"It ill becomes you, monsieur, to give your king a lesson," said Anne of Austria ; "rather procure him forty millions to replace those you make him lose."

"The king shall have them whenever he wishes," said the surintendant of the finances, bowing.

"Yes, by oppressing the people," said the queen.

"And were they not oppressed, madame," replied Fouquet, "when they were made to sweat the forty millions given by this deed? Furthermore, his majesty has asked my opinion,—I have given it ; if his majesty asks my concurrence, it will be the same."

"Nonsense ! accept, my son, accept," said Anne of Austria. "You are above reports and interpretations."

"Refuse, sire," said Fouquet. "As long as a king lives, he has no other measure but his conscience—no other judge but his own desires ; but when dead, he has posterity, which applauds or accuses."

"Thank you, mother," replied Louis, bowing respectfully to the queen. "Thank you, Monsieur Fouquet," said he, dismissing the surintendant civilly.

"Do you accept?" asked Anne of Austria, once more.

"I will consider of it," replied he, looking at Fouquet.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## AGONY

THE day after the deed of donation had been sent to the king, the cardinal caused himself to be transported to Vincennes. The king and the court followed him thither. The last flashes of this torch still cast splendour enough around to absorb in its radiations all other lights. Besides, as it has been seen, the faithful satellite of his minister, young Louis XIV. marched to the last minute in accordance with his gravitation. The disease as Guénaud had predicted, had become worse ; it was no longer an attack of gout, it was an attack of death : then there was another thing which made that agony more agonizing still,—and that was the agitation introduced into his mind by the donation he had sent to the king, and, which, according to Colbert, the king ought to send back not accepted to the cardinal. The cardinal had, as we have said, great faith in the predictions of his secretary ; but the sum was a large one, and whatever might be the genius of Colbert, from time to time the cardinal thought to himself that the Theatin also might possibly have been mistaken, and there was at least as much chance of his not being damned, as there was that Louis XIV. would send him back his millions. Besides, the longer the donation was in coming back, the more Mazarin thought that forty millions were worth a little risk, particularly of so hypothetic a thing as the soul. Mazarin, in his character of cardinal and prime minister, was almost an atheist, and quite a materialist. Every time that the door opened, he turned sharply round towards that door, expecting to see the return of his unfortunate donation ; then, deceived in his hope, he threw himself down again in his bed with a sigh, and found his pains so much the greater for having forgotten them for an instant. Anne of Austria had also followed the cardinal ; her heart, though age had made it selfish, could not help evincing towards the dying man a sorrow which she owed him as a wife, according to some ; and as a sovereign, according to others. She had, in some sort, put on mourning in her countenance beforehand, and all the court wore it as she did. Louis, in order not to show on his face what was passing at the bottom of his heart, persisted in remaining in his own apartments, where his nurse alone kept him company ; the more he reckoned upon the approach of the time when all constraint would be at an end, the more humble and patient he was, falling back upon himself, as all strong men do when they form great designs, in order to gain more spring at the decisive moment. Extreme unction had been administered to the cardinal, who, faithful to his habits of dissimulation, struggled against appearances, and even against reality, receiving company in his bed, as if only afflicted with a temporary complaint. Guénaud, on his part, preserved profound secrecy ; fatigued with visits and questions, he answered nothing but “his eminence is still full of youth and strength, but God wills that which he wills, and when he has decided that man is to be laid low, he will be laid low.” These words, which he scattered with a sort of discretion, reserve, and preference, were commented upon earnestly by two persons,—the king and the cardinal. Mazarin, notwithstanding the prophecy of Guénaud, still lured himself, or rather, so well played his part, that the most cunning, when saying he lured himself, proved that they were his dupes. Louis, absent from the cardinal two days ; Louis, with his eyes fixed upon that same donation which so constantly pre-occupied the cardinal ; Louis did not exactly know how to make out

Mazarin's conduct. The son of Louis XIII., following the paternal traditions, had, to that time been so little of a king that, whilst ardently desiring royalty, he desired it with that terror which always accompanies the unknown. Thus, having formed his resolution, which, besides, he communicated to nobody, he determined to have an interview with Mazarin. It was Anne of Austria, who, constant in her attendance upon the cardinal, first heard this proposition of the king's, and who transmitted it to the dying man, whom it greatly agitated. For what purpose could Louis wish for an interview? Was it to return the deed, as Colbert had said he would? Was it to keep it, after thanking him, as Mazarin thought he would? Nevertheless, as the dying man felt that the uncertainty increased his torments, he did not hesitate an instant.

"His majesty will be welcome,—yes, very welcome," cried he, making Colbert, who was seated at the foot of the bed, a sign which the latter comprehended perfectly. "Madame," continued Mazarin, "will your majesty be good enough to assure the king yourself of the truth of what I have just said?"

Anne of Austria rose; she herself was anxious to have the question of the forty millions settled—the question which seemed to lie heavy on the mind of everybody. Anne of Austria went out; Mazarin made a great effort, and, raising himself up towards Colbert: "Well, Colbert," said he, "two days have passed away—two mortal days—and, you see, nothing is come back from yonder."

"Patience, monseigneur," said Colbert.

"Art thou mad, thou wretch? Thou advisest me to have patience! Oh, in sad truth, Colbert, thou art laughing at me. I am dying, and thou callest out to me to wait!"

"Monseigneur," said Colbert, with his habitual coolness, "it is impossible that things should not fall out as I have said. His majesty is coming to see you, and, no doubt, he brings back the deed himself."

"Do you think so? Well, I, on the contrary, am sure that his majesty is coming to thank me."

At this moment Anne of Austria returned. On her way to the apartments of her son, she had met with a new empiric. This concerned a powder which, it was said, had power to save the cardinal; and she brought a portion of this powder with her. But this was not what Mazarin expected; therefore he would not even look at it, declaring that life was not worth the pains that were taken to preserve it. But, whilst professing this philosophical axiom, his long-confined secret escaped him at last.

"That, madame," said he, "that is not the interesting part of my situation. I made the king, now two days ago, a little donation; up to this time, from delicacy, no doubt, his majesty has not condescended to say anything about it; but the time for explanation is come, and I implore your majesty to tell me if the king has made up his mind on that matter."

Anne of Austria was about to reply, when Mazarin stopped her.

"The truth, madame," said he—"in the name of Heaven, the truth! Do not flatter a dying man with a hope that may prove vain." There he stopped, a look from Colbert telling him that he was on a wrong tack.

"I know," said Anne of Austria, taking the cardinal's hand, "I know that you have generously made, not a little donation, as you with so much modesty call it, but a magnificent gift. I know how painful it would be to you if the king——"

Mazarin listened, dying as he was, as ten living men could not have listened.

"That the king——" replied he.

"That the king," continued Anne of Austria, "should not freely accept what you offer so nobly."

Mazarin allowed himself to sink back upon his pillow like Pantaloone; that is to say, with all the despair of a man who yields to the tempest but he still preserved sufficient strength and presence of mind to cast upon Colbert one of those looks which are well worth a hundred sonnets, which is to say, ten long poems.

"Should you not," added the queen, "have considered the refusal of the king as a sort of insult?" Mazarin rolled his head about upon his pillow without articulating a syllable. The queen was deceived, or feigned to be deceived, by this demonstration.

"Therefore," resumed she, "I have circumvented him with good counsels; and as certain minds, jealous, no doubt, of the glory you are about to acquire by this generosity, have endeavoured to prove to the king that he ought not to accept of this donation, I have struggled in your favour, and so well have I struggled, that you will not have, I hope, that disagreeable to undergo."

"Ah!" murmured Mazarin, with languishing eyes, "ah! that is a service I shall never forget for a single minute during the few hours I have to live."

"I must admit," continued the queen, "that it was not without trouble rendered it to your eminence."

"Ah, *peste*! I believe that. Oh! oh!"

"Good God! what is the matter?"

"I am burning!"

"Do you suffer much?"

"As much as one of the damned."

Colbert would have wished to have sunk through the flooring.

"So, then," resumed Mazarin, "your majesty thinks that the king——" he stopped several seconds—"that the king is coming here to offer me some small thanks?"

"I think so," said the queen. Mazarin annihilated Colbert with his last look.

At that moment the ushers announced that the king was in the ante-chambers, which were filled with people. This announcement produced a stir of which Colbert took advantage to escape by the door of the *ruelle*. Anne of Austria rose, and awaited her son, standing. Louis XIV. appeared at the threshold of the door, with his eyes fixed upon the dying man, who did not even think it worth while to notice that majesty from which he thought he had nothing more to expect. An usher placed a *fauteuil* close to the bed. Louis bowed to his mother, then to the cardinal, and sat down. The queen took a seat in her turn. Then, as the king had looked behind him, the usher understood that look, and made a sign to the courtiers who filled up the doorway to be gone, which they instantly complied with. Silence fell upon the chamber with the velvet curtains. The king, still very young, and very timid in the presence of him who had been his master from his birth, still respected him much, particularly now, surrounded with the supreme majesty of death. He did not dare, therefore, to commence the conversation, feeling that every word must have its bearing, not only upon things of this world, but of the next. As to the cardinal, at that moment he had but one thought—his donation

It was not physical pain which gave him that air of despondency, and that lugubrious look ; it was the expectation of the thanks that were about to issue from the king's mouth, and cut off all hope of restitution. Mazarin was the first to break the silence. "Is your majesty come to make any stay at Vincennes?" said he.

Louis made an affirmative sign with his head.

"That is a gracious favour," continued Mazarin, "granted to a dying man, and which will render death more mild to him."

"I hope," replied the king, "I am come to visit, not a dying man, but a sick man susceptible of cure." Mazarin replied by a movement of the head.

"Your majesty is very kind ; but I know more than you on that subject. The last visit, sire," said he, "the last visit."

"If it were so, monsieur le cardinal," said Louis, "I would come a last time to ask the counsels of a guide to whom I owe everything."

Anne of Austria was a woman, she could not restrain her tears. Louis showed himself much affected, and Mazarin still more than his two guests, but from very different motives. Here the silence returned. The queen wiped her eyes, and the king resumed his firmness.

"I was saying," continued the king, "that I owed much to your eminence." The eyes of the cardinal devoured the king, for he felt the great moment was come. "And," continued Louis, "the principal object of my visit was to offer you very sincere thanks for the last evidence of friendship you have kindly sent me."

The cheeks of the cardinal sunk in, his lips partially opened, and the most lamentable sigh he had ever uttered was about to issue from his chest.

"Sire," said he, "I may have despoiled my poor family ; I may have ruined all that belong to me, which may be imputed to me as an error ; but, at least, it shall not be said of me that I have refused to sacrifice everything to my king."

Anne of Austria's tears flowed afresh.

"My dear Monsieur Mazarin," said the king, in a more serious tone than might have been expected from his youth, "you have misunderstood me, apparently."

Mazarin raised himself upon his elbow.

"I have no purpose to despoil your dear family, nor to ruin your servants. Oh, no, that shall never be !"

"Humph !" thought Mazarin, "he is going to restore me some bribe ; let us get the largest piece out of the trap we can."

"The king is going to be foolishly affected, and play the generous," thought the queen ; "he must not be allowed to impoverish himself ; such an opportunity for gaining a fortune will never occur again."

"Sire," said the cardinal aloud, "my family is very numerous, and my nieces will be destitute when I am gone."

"Oh !" interrupted the queen, eagerly, "have no uneasiness with respect to your family, dear Monsieur Mazarin ; we have no friends dearer than your friends ; your nieces shall be my children, the sisters of his majesty ; and if a favour be distributed in France, it shall be to those you love."

"Smoke !" thought Mazarin, who knew better than any one the faith that can be put in the promises of kings. Louis read the dying man's thought in his face.

"Be comforted, my dear Monsieur Mazarin," said he, with a half smile,

sad beneath its irony ; “ the Mesdemoiselles de Mancini will lose, when losing you, their most precious good ; but they shall none the less be the richest heiresses of France ; and since you have been kind enough to give me their dowry ”—the cardinal was panting—“ I restore it to them,” continued Louis, drawing from his breast, and holding towards the cardinal’s bed the parchment which contained the donation that, during two days, had kept alive such tempests in the mind of Mazarin.

“ What did I tell you, monseigneur ? ” murmured in the *ruelle* a voice, which passed away like a breath.

“ Your majesty returns me my donation ! ” cried Mazarin, so disturbed by joy as to forget his character of a benefactor.

“ Your majesty rejects the forty millions ! ” cried Anne of Austria, so stupefied as to forget her character of an afflicted wife, or queen.

“ Yes, monsieur le cardinal ; yes, madame,” replied Louis XIV., tearing the parchment which Mazarin had not yet ventured to clutch ; “ yes, I annihilate this deed which despoiled a whole family. The wealth acquired by his eminence in my service is his own wealth and not mine.”

“ But, sire, does your majesty reflect,” said Anne of Austria, “ that you have not ten thousand crowns in your coffers ? ”

“ Madame, I have just performed my first royal action, and I hope will worthily inaugurate my reign.”

“ Ah ! sire, you are right ! ” cried Mazarin ; “ that is truly great—that is truly generous which you have just done.” And he looked, one after the other, at the pieces of the act spread over his bed, to assure himself that it was the original and not a copy that had been torn. At length his eyes fell upon the fragment which bore his signature, and, recognising it, he sunk back swooning on his bolster. Anne of Austria, without strength to conceal her regret, raised her hands and eyes towards heaven.

“ Oh ! sire,” cried Mazarin, “ be you blessed ! My God ! May you be beloved by all my family ! *Per Baccho !* if ever any discontent comes to you on the part of those belonging to me, sire, only frown, and I will rise from my tomb ! ”

This *pantolonnade* did not produce all the effect Mazarin had reckoned upon. Louis had already passed to considerations of a more elevated nature, and as to Anne of Austria, unable to support, without abandoning herself to the anger she felt burning within her, the magnanimity of her son and the hypocrisy of the cardinal, she arose and left the chamber, heedless of thus betraying the extent of her grief. Mazarin saw all this, and fearing that Louis XIV. might repent of his decision, he began, in order to draw attention another way, to cry out, as, at a later period, Scapin was to cry out, in that sublime piece of pleasantry which the morose and grumbling Boileau dared to reproach Molière with. His cries, however, by degrees, became fainter, and when Anne of Austria left the apartment, they ceased altogether.

“ Monsieur le cardinal,” said the king, “ have you any recommendations to make to me ? ”

“ Sire,” replied Mazarin, “ you are already wisdom itself, prudence personified ; of your generosity I will not venture to speak ; that which you have just done exceeds all that the most generous men of antiquity or of modern times have ever done.” The king received this praise coldly.

“ So you confine yourself, monsieur,” said he, “ to your thanks—ar your experience, much more extensive than my wisdom, my prudence, my generosity, does not furnish me with a single piece of friendly advice to guide my future.” Mazarin reflected for a moment. “ You have just done much for me, sire,” said he, “ that is, for mine.”

"Say no more about that," said the king.

"Well!" continued Mazarin, "I will return you something in exchange for these forty millions you have given up so royally."

Louis XIV., by a movement, indicated that these flatteries were unpleasing to him. "I will give you a piece of advice," continued Mazarin; "yes, a piece of advice—advice more precious than the forty millions."

"Monsieur le cardinal!" interrupted Louis.

"Sire, listen to this advice."

"I am listening."

"Come nearer, sire, for I am weak!—nearer, sire, nearer!"

The king bent over the dying man. "Sire," said Mazarin, in so low a tone that the breath of his words arrived only like a recommendation from the tomb in the attentive ears of the king—"Sire, never have a prime minister."

Louis drew back astonished. The advice was a confession—a treasure, in fact, was that sincere confession of Mazarin. The legacy of the cardinal to the young king was composed of six words only, but those six words, as Mazarin had said, were worth forty millions. Louis remained for an instant confounded. As for Mazarin, he appeared only to have said something quite natural. A little scratching was heard along the curtains of the *ruelle*. Mazarin understood: "Yes, yes!" cried he warmly, "yes, sire, I recommend you a wise man, an honest man, and a clever man."

"Tell me his name, monsieur le cardinal."

"His name is yet almost unknown, sire; it is M. Colbert, my intendant. Oh! try him," added Mazarin, in an earnest voice; "all that he has predicted has come to pass; he has a safe glance, he is never mistaken either in things or in men—which is more surprising still. Sire, I owe you much but I think I acquit myself of all towards you in giving you M. Colbert."

"So be it," said Louis, faintly, for, as Mazarin had said, the name of Colbert was quite unknown to him, and he thought the enthusiasm of the cardinal partook of the delirium of a dying man. The cardinal sunk back on his pillow.

"For the present, adieu, sire; adieu!" murmured Mazarin. "I am tired, and I have yet a rough journey to perform before I present myself to my new master.—Adieu, sire!"

The young king felt the tears rise to his eyes; he bent over the dying man, already half a corpse, and then precipitately retired.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

### THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF COLBERT.

THE whole night was passed in anguish, common to the dying man and the king; the dying man expected his deliverance, the king expected his liberty. Louis did not go to bed. An hour after leaving the chamber of the cardinal, he learnt that the dying man, recovering a little strength, had insisted upon being dressed, farded and painted, and seeing the ambassadors. Like Augustus, he no doubt considered the world to be a great theatre, and was desirous of playing out the last act of the comedy. Anne of Austria reappeared no more in the cardinal's apartments; she had nothing more to do there. Propriety was the pretext for her absence. On her part, the cardinal did not ask for her; the advice the queen had given her son rankled in his heart. Towards midnight, still farded, Mazarin's mortal agony came on. He had revised his testament and as

this testament was the exact expression of his will, and as he feared that some interested influence might take advantage of his weakness to make him change something in that testament, he had given orders to Colbert, who walked up and down the corridor which led to the cardinal's bed-chamber, like the most vigilant of sentinels. The king, shut up in his own apartment, despatched his nurse every hour to Mazarin's chamber, with orders to bring him back the exact bulletin of the cardinal's state. After having heard that Mazarin was dressed, painted, and had seen the ambassadors, Louis heard that prayers for the dying were commenced for the cardinal. At one o'clock in the morning, Guénaud had administered the last remedy. This was a relic of the old customs of that fencing time, which was about to disappear to give place to another time, to believe that death could be kept off by some good secret thrust. Mazarin, after having taken the remedy, respired freely for nearly ten minutes. He immediately gave orders that the news should be spread everywhere of a fortunate crisis. The king, on learning this, felt as if a cold sweat were passing over his brow;—he had had a glimpse of the light of liberty; slavery appeared to him more dark and less acceptable than ever. But the bulletin which followed entirely changed the face of things. Mazarin could no longer breathe at all, and could scarcely follow the prayers which the curé of Saint-Nicholas-des-Champs recited near him. The king resumed his agitated walk about his chamber, and consulted, as he walked, several papers drawn from a casket of which he alone had the key. A third time the nurse returned. M. de Mazarin had just uttered a joke, and had ordered his "Flora," by Titian, to be revarnished. At length, towards two o'clock in the morning, the king could no longer resist his weariness: he had not slept for twenty-four hours. Sleep, so powerful at his age, overcame him for about an hour. But he did not go to bed for that hour; he slept in a *fauteuil*. About four o'clock his nurse awoke him by entering the room. "Well?" asked the king.

"Well, my dear sire," said the nurse, clasping her hands with an air of commiseration. "Well; he is dead!"

The king arose at a bound, as if a steel spring had been applied to his legs. "Dead!" cried he.

"Alas! yes."

"Is it quite certain?"—"Yes."

"Official?"—"Yes."

"Has the news of it been made public?"

"Not yet."

"Who told you, then, that the cardinal was dead?"

"M. Colbert."

"M. Colbert?"—"Yes."

"And was he sure of what he said?"

"He came out of the chamber, and had held a glass for some minutes before the cardinal's lips."

"Ah!" said the king. "And what has become of M. Colbert?"

"He has just left the chamber of his eminence."

"To go whither?"

"To follow me."

"So that he is——"

"There, my dear sire, waiting at your door, till it shall be your good pleasure to receive him."

Louis ran to the door, opened it himself, and perceived in the passage Colbert standing waiting. The king started at the sight of this statue, all

clothed in black. Colbert, bowing with profound respect, advanced two steps towards his majesty. Louis re-entered his chamber, making Colbert a sign to follow him. Colbert entered; Louis dismissed the nurse, who closed the door as she went out. Colbert remained modestly standing near that door.

"What do you come to announce to me, monsieur?" said Louis, very much troubled at being thus surprised in his private thoughts, which he could not completely conceal.

"That monsieur le cardinal has just expired, sire; and that I bring your majesty his last adieu."

The king remained pensive for a minute; and during that minute he looked attentively at Colbert;—it was evident that the cardinal's last words were in his mind. "Are you, then, M. Colbert?" asked he.

"Yes, sire."

"The faithful servant of his eminence, as his eminence himself told me?"

"Yes, sire."

"The depository of part of his secrets?"

"Of all of them."

"The friends and servants of his defunct eminence will be dear to me, monsieur, and I shall take care that you are placed in my offices."

Colbert bowed.

"You are a financier, monsieur, I believe?"

"Yes, sire."

"And did monsieur le cardinal employ you in his stewardship?"

"I had that honour, sire."

"You never did anything personally for my household, I believe?"

"Pardon me, sire, it was I who had the honour of giving monsieur le cardinal the idea of an economy which puts three hundred thousand francs a year into your majesty's coffers."

"What economy was that, monsieur?" asked Louis XIV.

"Your majesty knows that the hundred Swiss have silver lace on each side of their ribbons?"

"Doubtless."

"Well, sire, it was I who proposed that false silver lace should be placed upon these ribbons; it could not be seen, and a hundred thousand crowns serve to feed a regiment during six months; or is the price of ten thousand good muskets; or is the value of a vessel of ten guns, ready for sea."

"That is true," said Louis XIV., considering the personage more attentively, "and *ma foi!* there is an economy well placed; besides it was ridiculous for soldiers to wear the same lace as noblemen wear."

"I am happy to be approved of by your majesty."

"Is that the only appointment you held about the cardinal?" asked the king.

"It was I who was appointed to examine the accounts of the surintendant, sire."

"Ah!" said Louis, who was about to dismiss Colbert, but whom that word stopped; "Ah! it was you whom his eminence had charged to control M. Fouquet, was it? And the result of the examination?"

"Is that there is a deficit, sire; but if your majesty will permit me——"

"Speak M. Colbert."

"I ought to give your majesty some explanations."

"Not at all, monsieur, it is you who have controlled these accounts; give me the result."

"That is very easily done, sire : empty everywhere, money nowhere."

"Beware, monsieur, you are roughly attacking the administration of M. Fouquet, who, nevertheless, I have heard say, is an able man."

Colbert coloured, and then became pale, for he felt from that minute entered upon a struggle with a man whose power almost equalled the power of him who had just died. "Yes, sire, a very able man," repeated Colbert, bowing.

"But if M. Fouquet is an able man, and, in spite of that ability, if money be wanting, whose fault is it?"

"I do not accuse, sire, I verify."

"That is well; make out your accounts, and present them to me. There is a deficit, do you say? A deficit may be temporary; credit returns and funds are restored."

"No, sire."

"Upon this year, perhaps, I understand that; but upon next year?"

"Next year is eaten as bare as the current year."

"But, the year after, then?"

"Like next year."

"What do you tell me, Monsieur Colbert?"

"I say there are four years engaged beforehand."

"They must have a loan, then."

"They must have three, sire."

"I will create offices to make them resign, and the money of the posts shall be paid into the treasury."

"Impossible, sire, for there have already been creations upon creations of offices, the provisions of which are given in blank, so that the purchasers enjoy them without filling them. That is why your majesty cannot make them resign. Further, upon each agreement M. Fouquet has made an abatement of a third, so that the people have been plundered, without your majesty profiting by it. Let your majesty set down clearly your thought, and tell me what you wish me to explain."

"You are right, clearness is what you wish, is it not?"

"Yes, sire, clearness. God is God above all things, because He made light."

"Well, for example," resumed Louis XIV., "if to-day, the cardinal being dead, and I being king, I wanted money?"

"Your majesty would not have any."

"Oh! that is strange, monsieur! How! my surintendant would not find me any money?"

Colbert shook his large head.

"How is that?" said the king; "are the revenues of the state so much in debt that there are no longer any revenues?"

"Yes, sire, to that extent."

The king started. "Explain me that, M. Colbert," added he, with a frown. "If it be so, I will get together the *ordonnances* to obtain from the holders a discharge, a liquidation, at a cheap rate."

"Impossible, for the *ordonnances* have been converted into bills, which bills, for the convenience of return and facility of transaction, are divided into so many parts, that the originals can no longer be recognised."

Louis, very much agitated, walked about, still frowning. "But, if this were as you say, Monsieur Colbert," said he, stopping all at once, "I should be ruined before I begin to reign."

"You are, in fact, sire," said the impassible *causer-up* of figures.

"Well, but yet, monsieur, the money is somewhere?"

"Yes, sire, and even as a beginning, I bring your majesty a note of funds which M. le Cardinal Mazarin was not willing to set down in his testament, neither in any act whatever, but which he confided to me."

"To you?"

"Yes, sire, with an injunction to remit it to your majesty."

"What! besides the forty millions of the testament?"

"Yes, sire."

"M. de Mazarin had still other funds?"—Colbert bowed.

"Why, that man was a gulf!" murmured the king. "M. de Mazarin on one side, M. Fouquet on the other,—more than a hundred millions, perhaps, between them! No wonder my coffers should be empty!"

Colbert waited without stirring.

"And is the sum you bring me worth the trouble?" asked the king.

"Yes, sire, it is a round sum."

"Amounting to how much?"

"To thirteen millions of livres, sire."

"Thirteen millions!" cried Louis, trembling with joy; "do you say thirteen millions, Monsieur Colbert?"

"I said thirteen millions, yes, your majesty."

"Of which everybody is ignorant?"

"Of which everybody is ignorant."

"Which are in your hands?"

"In my hands, yes, sire."

"And which I can have?"

"Within two hours, sire."

"But where are they, then?"

"In the cellar of a house which the cardinal possessed in the city, and which he was so kind as to leave to me by a particular clause of his will."

"You are acquainted with the cardinal's will, then?"

"I have a duplicate of it, signed by his hand."—"A duplicate?"

"Yes, sire, and here it is." Colbert drew the deed quietly from his pocket, and showed it to the king. The king read the article relative to the donation of the house.

"But," said he, "there is no question here but of the house, there is nothing said of the money."

"Your pardon, sire, it is in my conscience."

"And Monsieur Mazarin has intrusted it to you?"

"Why not, sire?"

"He! a man mistrustful of everybody?"

"He was not so of me, sire, as your majesty may perceive."

Louis fixed his eyes with admiration upon that vulgar but expressive face.

"You are an honest man, M. Colbert," said the king.

"That is not a virtue, it is a duty," replied Colbert, coolly.

"But," added Louis, "does not the money belong to the family?"

"If this money belonged to the family, it would be disposed of in the testament, as the rest of his fortune is. If this money belonged to the family, I, who drew up the deed of donation in favour of your majesty, should have added the sum of thirteen millions to that of forty millions which was offered to you."

"How!" exclaimed Louis XIV., "was it you who drew up the deed of donation?"

"Yes, sire."

"And yet the cardinal loved you?" added the king, ingenuously.

"I had assured his eminence you would by no means accept the gift," said Colbert, in that same quiet manner we have described, and which, even in the common habits of life, had something solemn in it. Louis passed his hand over his brow. "Oh! how young I am," murmured he, "to have the command of men."

Colbert waited the end of this interior monologue. He saw Louis raise his head. "At what hour shall I send the money to your majesty?" asked he.

"To-night, at eleven o'clock; I desire that no one may know that I possess this money."

Colbert made no more reply than if the thing had not been said to him.

"Is the amount in ingots, or coined gold?"

"In coined gold, sire."

"That is well."

"Where shall I send it to?"

"To the Louvre. Thank you, M. Colbert."

Colbert bowed and retired. "Thirteen millions!" exclaimed Louis, as soon as he was alone. "This must be a dream!" Then he allowed his head to sink between his hands, as if he were really asleep. But, at the end of a moment, he arose, and opening the window violently, he bathed his burning brow in the keen morning air, which brought to his senses the scent of the trees, and the perfume of flowers. A splendid dawn was rising in the horizon, and the first rays of the sun inundated with flame the brow of the young king. "This dawn is that of my reign," murmured Louis XIV. "Is it a presage that you send me, all-powerful God?"

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## CHAPTER L.

### THE FIRST DAY OF THE ROYALTY OF LOUIS XIV.

IN the morning, the news of the death of the cardinal was spread through the castle, and thence speedily reached the city. The ministers Fouquet, Lyonne, and Letellier entered *la salle des séances*, to hold a council. The king sent for them immediately. "Messieurs," said he, "as long as monsieur le cardinal lived, I allowed him to govern my affairs; but now, I mean to govern them myself. You will give me your advice when I shall ask it. You may go."

The ministers looked at each other with surprise. If they concealed a smile, it was with a great effort, for they knew that the prince, brought up in absolute ignorance of business, by this took upon himself a burden much too heavy for his strength. Fouquet took leave of his colleagues upon the stairs, saying:—"Messieurs! there will be so much the less labour for us."

And he got gaily into his carriage. The others, a little uneasy at the turn things had taken, went back to Paris together. Towards ten o'clock, the king repaired to the apartment of his mother, with whom he had a long and perfectly private conversation. After dinner, he got into his carriage and went straight to the Louvre. There he received much company, and took a degree of pleasure in remarking the hesitation of all, and the curiosity of each. Towards evening, he ordered the doors of the Louvre

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“THE MONEY IS IN YOUR MAJESTY’S CELLAR.”

to be closed, with the exception of one only, that which opened to the quay. He placed on duty at this point two hundred Swiss, who did not speak a word of French, with orders to admit all who carried packages, but no others ; and by no means to allow any one to go out. At eleven o'clock precisely, he heard the rolling of a heavy carriage under the arch, then of another, then of a third : after which the gate grated upon its hinges to be closed. Soon after, somebody scratched with their nail at the door of the cabinet. The king opened it himself, and beheld Colbert, whose first word was this :—" The money is in your majesty's cellar."

The king then descended and went himself to see the barrels of specie, in gold and silver, which, under the direction of Colbert, four men had just rolled into a cellar of which the king had given Colbert the key in the morning. This review completed, Louis returned to his apartments, followed by Colbert, who had not warmed his immovable coldness with one ray of personal satisfaction.

" Monsieur," said the king, " what do you wish that I should give you as a recompense for this devotedness and probity ?"

" Absolutely nothing, sire."

" How ! nothing ? Not even an opportunity of serving me ?"

" If your majesty were not to furnish me with that opportunity, I should not the less serve you. It is impossible for me not to be the best servant of the king."

" You shall be intendant of the finances, M. Colbert."

" But there is already a surintendant, sire."

" I know that."

" Sire, the surintendant of the finances is the most powerful man in the kingdom."

" Ah !" cried Louis, colouring, " do you think so ?"

" He will crush me in a week, sire. Your majesty gives me a *contrôle* for which strength is indispensable. An intendant under a surintendant—that is inferiority."

" You want support—you do not reckon upon me ?"

" I had the honour of telling your majesty that during the lifetime of M. de Mazarin, M. Fouquet was the second man in the kingdom ; now M. de Mazarin is dead, M. Fouquet is become the first."

" Monsieur, I agree to what you told me of all things, up to to-day, to-morrow, please to remember, I shall no longer suffer it."

" Then I shall be of no use to your majesty ?"

" You are already, since you fear to compromise yourself in serving me."

" I only fear to be placed so that I cannot serve your majesty."

" What do you wish then ?"

" I wish your majesty to allow me assistance in the labours of the office of intendant."

" The post would lose in value."

" It would gain in security."

" Choose your colleagues."

" Messrs. Breteuil, Marin, Harvard."

" To-morrow the *ordonnance* shall appear."

" Sire, I thank you."

" Is that all you ask ?"

" No, sire, one thing more."

" What is that ?"

" Allow me to compose a chamber of justice."

"What would this chamber of justice do?"

"Try the farmers-general and contractors, who, during ten years, have speculated."

"Well, but what would you do with them?"

"Hang two or three, and that would make the rest disgorge."

"I cannot commence my reign with executions, M. Colbert."

"On the contrary, sire, in order not to end with them."

The king made no reply. "Does your majesty consent?" said Colbert.

"I will reflect upon it, monsieur."

"It will be too late, when reflection may be made."

"Why?"

"Because we have to deal with people stronger than ourselves, if they are warned."

"Compose that chamber of justice, monsieur."

"I will, sire."

"Is that all?"

"No, sire; there is still an important affair. What rights does your majesty attach to this office of intendant?"

"Well—I do not know—the customary ones."

"Sire, I require that to this office be devolved the right of reading the correspondence with England."

"Impossible, monsieur, for that correspondence is kept from the council; monsieur le cardinal himself carried it on."

"I thought your majesty had this morning declared that there should no longer be a council?"

"Yes, I said so."

"Let your majesty then have the goodness to read all the letters yourself, particularly those from England; I hold strongly to this article."

"Monsieur, you shall have that correspondence, and render me an account of it."

"Now, sire, what shall I do with respect to the finances?"

"All which M. Fouquet has not done."

"That is all I ask of your majesty. Thanks, sire, I depart at ease;" and at these words he did depart. Louis watched that departure. Colbert was not yet a hundred paces from the Louvre, when the king recalled a courier from England. After having looked at and examined the envelope, the king broke the seal precipitately, and found only a letter from Charles II. The following is what the English prince wrote to his royal brother:—

"Your majesty must be rendered very uneasy by the illness of M. le Cardinal Mazarin; but the excess of danger can only prove of service to you. The cardinal is given over by his physician. I thank you for the gracious reply you have made to my communication touching the Princess Henrietta, my sister, and, in a week, the Princess and her court will set out for Paris. It is gratifying to me to acknowledge the fraternal friendship you have evinced towards me, and to call you, more justly than ever, my brother. It is gratifying to me, above everything, to prove to your majesty how much I am interested in all that may please you. You are having Belle-Isle-en-Mer secretly fortified. That is wrong. We shall never be at war against each other. That measure does not make me uneasy, it makes me sad. You are spending useless millions there; tell your ministers so; and be assured that I am well informed; render me the same service, my brother, if occasion offers."

The king rang his bell violently, and his *valet de chambre* appeared

"Monsieur Colbert is just gone ; he cannot be far off. Let him be called back !" exclaimed he. The valet was about to execute the order, when the king stopped him.

"No," said he, "no ; I see the whole scheme of that man. Belle-Isle belongs to M. Fouquet ; Belle-Isle is being fortified, that is a conspiracy on the part of M. Fouquet. The discovery of that conspiracy is the ruin of the surintendant, and that discovery is the result of the correspondence with England. Oh ! but I cannot place all my dependence upon that man ; he is but the head, I must have an arm !" Louis, all at once, uttered a joyful cry. "I had," said he, "a lieutenant of musketeers !"

"Yes, sire—Monsieur D'Artagnan."

"He quitted the service for a time."

"Yes, sire."

"Let him be found, and be here, to-morrow, at my *lever*."

The *valet de chambre* bowed and went out.

"Thirteen millions in my cellar," said the king ; "Colbert bearing my purse, and D'Artagnan carrying my sword—I am king !"

## CHAPTER LI.

### A PASSION.

THE day of his arrival, on returning from the Palais Royal, Athos, as we have seen, went straight to his hotel in the Rue Saint-Honoré. He there found the Vicomte de Bragelonne waiting for him in his chamber, chatting with Grimaud. It was not an easy thing to talk with this old servant. Two men only possessed the secret, Athos and D'Artagnan. The first succeeded, because Grimaud sought to make him speak himself ; D'Artagnan, on the contrary, because he knew how to make Grimaud talk. Raoul was occupied in making him describe the voyage to England, and Grimaud had related it in all its details with a certain number of gestures and eight words, neither more nor less. He had, at first, indicated, by an undulating movement of his hand, that his master and he had crossed the sea. "Upon some expedition?" Raoul had asked.

Grimaud, by bending down his head, had answered, "Yes."

"When monsieur le comte incurred much danger?" asked Raoul.

"Neither too much, nor too little," was replied by a shrug of the shoulders.

"But, still, what sort of danger?" insisted Raoul.

Grimaud pointed to the sword ; he pointed to the fire and to a musket hung up over the wall.

"Monsieur le comte had an enemy there, then?" cried Raoul.

"Monk," replied Grimaud.

"It is strange," continued Raoul "that monsieur le comte persists in considering me a novice, and not allowing me to partake the honour and danger of his rencounters."

Grimaud smiled. It was at this moment Athos came in. The host was lighting him up the stairs, and Grimaud, recognizing the step of his master, hastened to meet him, which cut short the conversation. But Raoul was launched into the sea of interrogatories, and did not stop. Taking both hands of the comte, with warm, but respectful tenderness,— "How is it, monsieur," said he, "that you have set out upon a dangerous voyage, without bidding me adieu, without commanding the aid of my sword, of myself, who ought to be your support, now I have the strength ; or me, whom

you have brought up like a man? Ah! monsieur, why would you expose me to the cruel trial of never seeing you again?"

"Who told you, Raoul," said the comte, placing his cloak and hat in the hands of Grimaud, who had unbuckled his sword, "Who told you that my voyage was a dangerous one?"

"I," said Grimaud.

"And why did you do so?" said Athos sternly.

Grimaud was embarrassed; Raoul came to his assistance, by answering for him. "It is natural, monsieur, that our good Grimaud should tell me the truth in what concerns you. By whom should you be loved and supported, if not by me?"

Athos did not reply. He made a friendly motion to Grimaud, which sent him out of the room; he then seated himself in a *fauteuil*, whilst Raoul remained standing before him.

"But is it true," continued Raoul, "that your voyage was an expedition, and that steel and fire threatened you?"

"Say no more about that, vicomte," said Athos mildly. "I set out hastily, it is true; but the service of King Charles II. required a prompt departure. As to your anxiety, I thank you for it, and I know that I can depend upon you. You have not wanted for anything, vicomte, in my absence, have you?"

"No, monsieur, thank you."

"I left orders with Blaisois to pay you a hundred pistoles, if you should stand in need of money."

"Monsieur, I have not seen Blaisois."

"You have been without money, then?"

"Monsieur, I had thirty pistoles left from the sale of the horses I took in my last campaign, and M. le Prince had the kindness to make me win two hundred pistoles at his play-table, three months ago."

"Do you play? I don't like that, Raoul."

"I never play, monsieur; it was M. le Prince who ordered me to hold his cards at Chantilly—one night when a courier came to him from the king. I won, and M. le Prince commanded me to take the stakes."

"Is that a practice in the household, Raoul?" asked Athos with a frown.

"Yes, monsieur; every week; M. le Prince affords, upon one occasion or another, a similar advantage to one of his gentlemen. There are fifty gentlemen in his highness's household; it was my turn that time."

"Very well! You went into Spain, then?"

"Yes, monsieur, I made a very delightful and interesting journey."

"You have been back a month, have you not?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And in the course of that month?"

"In that month——"

"What have you done?"

"My duties, monsieur."

"Have you not been home to La Fère?"

Raoul coloured. Athos looked at him with a fixed but tranquil expression.

"You would be wrong not to believe me," said Raoul. "I feel that I coloured, and in spite of myself. The question you did me the honour to ask me is of a nature to raise in me much emotion. I colour, then, because I am agitated—not because I meditate a falsehood."

"I know, Raoul, that you never lie."

"No, monsieur."

"Besides, my young friend, you would be wrong ; what I wanted to say——"

"I know quite well, monsieur. You would ask me if I have not been to Blois?"

"Exactly so."

"I have not been there ; I have not even seen the person of whom you would speak to me."

The voice of Raoul trembled as he pronounced these words. Athos, a sovereign judge in all matters of delicacy, immediately added, "Raoul, you answer with a painful feeling ; you are unhappy."

"Very, monsieur ; you have forbidden me to go to Blois, or to see Mademoiselle de la Vallière again." Here the young man stopped. That dear name, so delightful to pronounce, made his heart bleed, although so sweet upon his lips.

"And I have acted correctly, Raoul," Athos hastened to reply. "I am neither an unjust nor a barbarous father. I respect true love ; but I look forward for you for a future—an immense future. A new reign is about to break upon us like a fresh dawn. War calls upon a young king full of chivalric spirit. What is wanting to assist this heroic ardour is a battalion of young and free lieutenants who would rush to the fight with enthusiasm, and fall crying, '*Vive le Roi!*' instead of '*Adieu, my dear wife!*' You understand that, Raoul. However brutal my reasoning may appear to be, I conjure you, then, to believe me, and to turn away your thoughts from those early days of youth in which you took up this habit of love—days of effeminate carelessness, which soften the heart and render it incapable of containing those strong, bitter draughts called glory and adversity. Therefore, Raoul, I repeat to you, you should see in my counsel only the desire of being useful to you, only the ambition of seeing you prosper. I believe you capable of becoming a remarkable man. March alone, and you will march better, and more quickly."

"You have commanded, monsieur," replied Raoul, "and I obey."

"Commanded!" cried Athos. "Is it thus you reply to me? I have commanded you! Oh! you distort my words as you misconceive my intentions. I did not command you—I requested you."

"No, monsieur, you have commanded," said Raoul, persistently. "Had you only requested me, your request is still more effective than your order. I have not seen Mademoiselle de la Vallière again."

"But you are unhappy! you are unhappy!" insisted Athos.

Raoul made no reply.

"I find you pale ; I find you dull. The sentiment is strong, then :

"It is a passion," replied Raoul.

"No—a habit."

"Monsieur, you know I have travelled much, that I have passed two years far from her. A habit would yield to an absence of two years, I believe ; whereas, on my return, I loved, not more—that was impossible—but as much. Mademoiselle de la Vallière is for me the mate above all others ; but you are for me a god upon earth—to you I sacrifice everything."

"You are wrong," said Athos ; "I have no longer any right over you. Age has emancipated you ; you no longer even stand in need of my consent. Besides, I will not refuse my consent after what you have told me. Marry Mademoiselle de la Vallière if you like."

Raoul was startled ; but suddenly, "You are very kind, monsieur," said he, "and your concession excites my warmest gratitude ; but I will not accept it."

"Then you now refuse?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I will not oppose you in anything, Raoul."

"But you have at the bottom of your heart an idea against this marriage; you have not chosen it."

"That is true."

"That is sufficient to make me not persist; I will wait."

"Beware, Raoul! what you are now saying is serious."

"I know it is, monsieur. As I said, I will wait."

"Until I die?" said Athos, much agitated.

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Raoul, with tears in his eyes, "is it possible that you should wound my heart thus? I have never given you cause of complaint!"

"Dear boy, that is true," murmured Athos, pressing his lips violently together to suppress the emotion of which he was no longer master. "No, I will no longer afflict you; only I do not comprehend what you mean by waiting. Will you wait till you love no longer?"

"Ah! for that! No, monsieur; I will wait till you change your opinion."

"I should wish to put the matter to a test, Raoul; I should like to see if Mademoiselle de la Vallière will wait as you do."

"I hope so, monsieur."

"But take care, Raoul; if she did not wait? Ah, you are so young, so confiding, so loyal! Women are changeable."

"You have never spoken ill to me of women, monsieur; you have never had to complain of them. Why should you doubt of Mademoiselle de la Vallière?"

"That is true," said Athos, casting down his eyes: "I have never spoken ill to you of women; I have never had to complain of them; Mademoiselle de la Vallière never gave birth to a suspicion; but when we are looking forward, we must go even to exceptions, even to improbabilities! If, I say, Mademoiselle de la Vallière should not wait for you?"

"How, monsieur?"

"If she turned her eyes another way?"

"If she looked favourably upon another man—do you mean that, monsieur?" said Raoul, pale with agony.—"Exactly."

"Well, monsieur, I would kill that man," said Raoul, simply, "and all the men whom Mademoiselle de la Vallière should choose, until one of them had killed me, or Mademoiselle de la Vallière had restored me her heart."

Athos started. "I thought," resumed he, in an agitated voice, "that you called me just now your god, your law in this world."

"Oh!" said Raoul, trembling, "you would forbid me the duel?"

"If I forbade it, Raoul?"

"You would forbid me to hope, monsieur; consequently you would not forbid me to die."

Athos raised his eyes towards the vicomte. He had pronounced these words with the most melancholy inflection, accompanied by the most melancholy look. "Enough," said Athos, after a long silence, "enough of this subject, upon which we both go too far. Live as well as you are able, Raoul, perform your duties, love Mademoiselle de la Vallière; in a word, act like a man, since you have attained the age of a man; only do not forget that I love you tenderly, and that you profess to love me."

"Ah! monsieur le comte!" cried Raoul, pressing the hand of Athos to his heart.

"Enough, dear boy ! leave me ; I want rest. *A propos*, M. d'Artagnan has returned from England with me ; you owe him a visit."

"I will go and pay it him, monsieur, with great pleasure. I love Monsieur d'Artagnan exceedingly."

"You are right in doing so ; he is a worthy man and a brave cavalier."

"Who loves you dearly?"

"I am sure of that. Do you know his address?"

"At the Louvre, I suppose, or wherever the king is. Does he not command the musketeers?"

"No ; at present M. d'Artagnan is absent on leave ; he is resting a little. Do not, therefore, seek him at the posts of his service. You will hear of him at the house of a certain Planchet."

"His former lackey?"

"Exactly, turned grocer."

"I know ; Rue des Lombards?"

"Somewhere thereabouts, or Rue des Arcis."

"I will find it, monsieur,—I will find it."

"You will say a thousand kind things to him, on my part, and ask him to come and dine with me, before I set out for La Fère."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Good-night, Raoul !"

"Monsieur, I see you wear an order I never saw you wear before ; accept my compliments."

"The Fleece !—that is true. A coral, my boy, which no longer amuses even an old child like myself. Good-night, Raoul."

## CHAPTER LII.

### D'ARTAGNAN'S LESSON.

RAOUL did not meet with D'Artagnan the next day, as he had hoped. He only met with Planchet, whose joy was great at seeing the young man again, and who contrived to pay him two or three little soldierly compliments, savouring very little of the grocer's shop. But as Raoul was returning the next day from Vincennes, at the head of fifty dragoons confided to him by monsieur le prince, he perceived, in la Place Baudoyer, a man with his nose in the air, examining a house, as we examine a horse we have a fancy to buy. This man, dressed in citizen costume buttoned up like a military *pourpoint*, a very small hat on his head, but a long shagreen-mounted sword by his side, turned his head as soon as he heard the steps of the horses, and left off looking at the house to look at the dragoons. This was simply M. d'Artagnan ; D'Artagnan on foot ; D'Artagnan with his hands behind him, passing a little review upon the dragoons, after having reviewed the buildings. Not a man, not a tag not a horse's hoof escaped his inspection. Raoul rode at the side of his troop ; D'Artagnan perceived him the last. "Eh !" said he, "Eh ! *mordieux !*"

"I was not mistaken !" cried Raoul, turning his horse towards him.

"Mistaken—no ! Good day to you," replied the ex-musketeer ; whilst Raoul eagerly pressed the hand of his old friend. "Take care, Raoul," said D'Artagnan, "the second horse of the fifth rank will lose a shoe before he gets to the Pont Marie ; he has only two nails left in his off fore-foot."

"Wait a minute, I will come back," said Raoul.

"Can you quit your detachment?"

"The cornet is there to take my place."

"Then you will come and dine with me?"

"Most willingly, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"Be quick, then; leave your horse, or make them give me one."

"I prefer coming back on foot with you."

Raoul hastened to give notice to the cornet, who took his post; he then dismounted, gave his horse to one of the dragoons, and with great delight seized the arm of M. d'Artagnan, who had watched him during all these little evolutions, with the satisfaction of a connoisseur.

"What, do you come from Vincennes?" said he.

"Yes, monsieur le chevalier."

"And the cardinal?"

"Is very ill; it is even reported he is dead."

"Are you on good terms with M. Fouquet?" asked D'Artagnan, with a disdainful movement of the shoulders, proving that the death of Mazarin did not affect him beyond measure.

"With M. Fouquet?" said Raoul; "I do not know him."

"So much the worse! so much the worse! for a new king always seeks to get creatures."

"Oh! the king means no harm," replied the young man.

"I say nothing about the crown," cried D'Artagnan; "I am speaking of the king,—the king, that is M. Fouquet, if the cardinal is dead. You must contrive to be well with M. Fouquet, if you do not wish to moulder away all your life as I have mouldered. It is true you have, fortunately, other protectors."

"M. le prince, for instance."

"Worn out! worn out!"

"M. le Comte de la Fère?"

"Athos! oh! that's different; yes, Athos—and if you have any wish to make your way in England, you cannot apply to a better person. I can even say, without too much vanity, that I myself have some credit at the court of Charles II. There is a king—God speed him!"

"Ah!" cried Raoul, with the natural curiosity of well-born young people, while listening to experience and courage.

"Yes, a king who amuses himself, it is true, but who has had a sword in his hand, and can appreciate useful men. Athos is on good terms with Charles II. Take service there, and leave these scoundrels of contractors and farmers-general, who steal as well with French hands as others have done with Italian hands; leave the little snivelling king, who is going to give us another reign of Francis II. Do you know anything of history, Raoul?"

"Yes, monsieur le chevalier."

"Do you know, then, that Francis II. had always the ear-ache?"

"No, I did not know that."

"That Charles IV. had always the head-ache?"

"Indeed!"

"And Henry III. always the stomach-ache."

Raoul began to laugh.

"Well, my dear friend, Louis XIV. always has the heart-ache; it is deplorable to see a king sighing from morning till night, without saying once in the course of the day, *ventre-saint-gris! corbœuf!* or anything to rouse one."

"Was that the reason why you quitted the service, monsieur le chevalier?"—"Yes."

"But you yourself, M. D'Artagnan, are throwing the handle after the axe; you will not make a fortune."

"Who! I?" replied D'Artagnan in a careless tone; "I am settled—I had some family property."

Raoul looked at him. The poverty of D'Artagnan was proverbial. A Gascon, he exceeded in ill-luck all the gasconnades of France and Navarre; Raoul had a hundred times heard Job and D'Artagnan named together, as the twins Romulus and Remus are named. D'Artagnan caught Raoul's look of astonishment.

"And has not your father told you I have been in England?"

"Yes, monsieur le chevalier."

"And that I had there met with a very lucky chance?"

"No, monsieur, I did not know that."

"Yes, a very worthy friend of mine, a great nobleman, the Viceroy of Scotland and Ireland, has endowed me with an inheritance."

"An inheritance?"

"And a good one, too."

"Then you are rich?"

"Pugh!"

"Receive my sincere congratulation."

"Thank you! Look, that is my house."

"Place de Grève?"

"Yes, you don't like this quarter?"

"On the contrary, the look-out on the water is pleasant. Oh! what a pretty old house!"

"The sign Nôtre Dame; it is an old *cabaret*, which I have transformed into a private house in two days."

"But the *cabaret* is still open?"

"*Pardieu!*"

"And where do you lodge then?"

"I? I lodge with Planchet."

"You said just now, 'This is my house.'"

"I said so, because, in fact, it is my house. I have bought it."

"Ah!" said Raoul.

"At ten years' purchase, my dear Raoul; a superb affair; I bought the house for thirty thousand livres: it has a garden opens to the Rue de la Matillerie; the *cabaret* lets for a thousand livres, with the first story; the garret, or second floor, for five hundred livres."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed."

"Five hundred livres for a garret? Why, that is not habitable."

"Therefore no one does inhabit it; only you see this garret has two windows which look out upon the Place."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, then, every time anybody is broken on the wheel or hung, quartered, or burnt, these two windows are let for twenty pistoles."

"Oh!" said Raoul, with horror.

"It is disgusting; is it not?" said D'Artagnan.

"Oh!" repeated Raoul.

"It is disgusting, but so it is. These Parisian cockneys are sometimes real anthropophagi. I cannot conceive how men, Christians, can make such speculations."

"That is true."

"As for myself," continued D'Artagnan, "if I inhabited that house on days of execution, I would shut it up to the very keyholes; but I do not inhabit it."

"And you let the garret for five hundred livres?"

"To the ferocious *cabaretier*, who sub-lets it. I said then fifteen hundred livres."

"The natural interest of money," said Raoul,—*"five per cent."*

"Exactly so. I then have left the side of the house at the back magazines, lodgings, and cellars, inundated every winter, two hundred livres; and the garden, which is very fine, well planted, well shaded under the walls and the portal of Saint-Gervais-Saint-Protais, thirteen hundred livres."

"Thirteen hundred livres! why that is royal!"

"This is the history of it. I strongly suspect some canon of the parish (these canons are all as rich as Cræsus)—I suspect some canon of having hired the garden to take his pleasure in. The tenant has given the name of M. Godard. That is either a false name or a real name; if true, he is a canon, if false, he is some unknown; but of what consequence is it to me? he always pays in advance. I had also an idea just now, when I met you, of buying a house in the Place Baudoyer, the back premises of which join my garden, and would make a magnificent property. Your dragoons interrupted my calculations. But come, let us take the Rue de Vannerie, that will lead us straight to M. Planchet's." D'Artagnan mended his pace, and conducted Raoul to Planchet's dwelling, a chamber of which the grocer had given up to his old master. Planchet was out, but the dinner was ready. There was a remains of military regularity and punctuality preserved in the grocer's household. D'Artagnan returned to the chapter of Raoul's future.

"Your father keeps you rather strictly?" said he.

"Justly, *monsieur le chevalier*."

"Oh, yes, I know Athos is just; but close, perhaps?"

"A royal hand, *Monsieur d'Artagnan*."

"Well, never want, my boy! If ever you stand in need of a few pistoles, the old musketeer is at hand."

"My dear *Monsieur d'Artagnan*."

"Do you play a little?"—"Never."

"Successful with the ladies, then?—Oh! my little Aramis! That, my dear friend, costs still more than play. It is true we fight when we lose; that is a compensation. Bah! the little sniveller of a king makes men who draw pay for it. What a reign! my poor Raoul, what a reign! When we think that, in my time, the musketeers were besieged in their houses, like Hector and Priam in the city of Troy; and then the women wept, and then the walls laughed, and then five hundred beggarly fellows clapped their hands, and cried, 'Kill! kill!' when not one musketeer was hurt! *Mordieux!* you will never see anything like that."

"You are very hard upon the king, my dear *Monsieur d'Artagnan*; and yet you scarcely know him."

"I! Listen Raoul. Day by day, hour by hour,—take note of my words,—I will predict what he will do. The cardinal being dead, he will weep: very well, that is the thing the least silly he will do, particularly if he does not shed a tear."

"And then?"

"Why then he will get M. Fouquet to allow him a pension, and will go and compose verses at Fontainebleau, upon some Mancini or other, whose eyes the queen will scratch out. She is a Spaniard, see you,—this queen of ours; and she has, as a mother-in-law, Madame Anne of Austria. I know something of the Spaniards of the house of Austria."

"And next?"

"Well? after having torn off the silver lace from the uniforms of his Swiss, because lace is too expensive, he will dismount the musketeers, because the oats and hay of a horse cost five sols a day."

"Oh! do not say that."

"Of what consequence is it to me; I am no longer a musketeer, am I? Let them be on horseback, let them be on foot, let them carry a larding-pin, a spit, a sword, or nothing—what is it to me?"

"My dear Monsieur d'Artagnan, I beseech you, say no more ill to me of the king. I am almost in his service, and my father would be very angry with me for having heard even from your mouth words that were offensive to his majesty."

"Your father, eh! He is a knight in every bad cause. *Pardieu!* yes, your father is a brave, is a Cæsar, it is true, but a man without perception."

"Now, my dear chevalier," exclaimed Raoul, laughing, "what are you going to speak ill of my father, of him you call the great Athos? Truly you are in a bad vein to-day; riches render you as sour as poverty renders other people."

"*Pardieu!* you are right. I am a rascal and in my dotage; I am an unhappy wretch grown old; a forage cord untwisted, a pierced cuirass, a boot without a sole, a spur without a rowel;—but do me the pleasure to say one thing for me?"

"What is that, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan?"

"Say this to me: 'Mazarin was a pitiful wretch.'"

"Perhaps he is dead."

"More the reason,—I say *was*; if I did not hope that he was dead, I would entreat you to say: 'Mazarin *is* a pitiful wretch.' Come say so, say so, for the love of me."

"Well, I will."

"Say it!"

"Mazarin was a pitiful wretch," said Raoul, smiling at the musketeer, who roared with laughter as in his best days.

"A moment," said the latter, "you have spoken my first proposition, here is the conclusion of it,—repeat, Raoul, repeat: 'But I regret Mazarin.'"

"Chevalier!"

"You will not say it? Well, then, I will say it twice for you."

"But you would regret Mazarin?"

And they were still laughing and discussing this digesting of a profession of principles, when one of the shop-boys entered. "A letter, monsieur," said he, "for M. d'Artagnan."

"Thank you; give it me," cried the musketeer.

"The handwriting of monsieur le comte," said Raoul.

"Yes, yes." And D'Artagnan broke the seal.

"Dear friend," said Athos, "a person has just been here to beg me to seek for you on the part of the king."

"Seek me!" said D'Artagnan, letting the paper fall upon the table. Raoul picked it up, and continued to read aloud:—

"Make haste. His majesty is very anxious to speak to you, and expects you at the Louvre."

"Expects me!" again repeated the musketeer.

"He, he, he!" laughed Raoul.

"Oh, oh!" replied D'Artagnan. "What the devil can this mean?"

## CHAPTER LIIL.

## THE KING.

THE first movement of surprise over, D'Artagnan re-perused Athos's note. "It is strange," said he, "that the king should send for me."

"Why so?" said Raoul; "do you not think, monsieur, that the king must regret such a servant as you?"

"Oh, oh!" cried the officer, laughing with all his might; "you are jeering me, master Raoul. If the king had regretted me he would not have let me leave him. No, no; I see in it something better, or worse, if you like."

"Worse! What can that be, monsieur le chevalier?"

"You are young, you are a boy, you are admirable. Oh, how I should like to be as you are. To be but twenty-four, with an unfurrowed brow, under which the brain is void of everything but woman, love, and good intentions. Oh, Raoul, as long as you have not received the smile of kings, the confidence of queens! as long as you have not had two cardinals killed under you, the one a tiger, the other a fox; as long as you have not—But what is the good of all this trifling? We must part, Raoul."

"How you speak that! What a serious face!"

"Eh! but the occasion is worthy of it. Listen to me, I have a very good recommendation to make you."

"I am all attention, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"You will go and inform your father of my departure."

"Your departure?"

"*Pardieu!*—You will tell him that I am gone into England; and that I am living in my little country-house."

"In England, you!—And the king's orders?"

"You get more and more silly: do you imagine that I am going in that way to the Louvre, to place myself at the disposal of that little crowned wolf-cub?"

"The king a wolf-cub? Why, monsieur le chevalier, you are mad!"

"On the contrary, I was never so much otherwise. You do not know what he wants to do with me, this worthy son of *Louis le Juste!*—But, *mordieux!* that is policy.—He wishes to ensconce me snugly in the Bastille, purely and simply, see you!"

"What for?" cried Raoul, terrified at what he heard.

"On account of what I told him one day at Blois. I was warm; he remembers it."

"You told him what?"

"That he was mean, cowardly, and silly."

"Good God!" cried Raoul, "is it possible that such words should have issued from your mouth?"

"Perhaps I don't give the letter of my speech, but I give the sense of it."

"But did not the king have you arrested immediately?"

"By whom? It was I who commanded the musketeers; he must have commanded me to convey myself to prison; I would never have consented: I would have resisted myself. And then I went into England—no more D'Artagnan. Now, the cardinal is dead, or nearly so, they learn that I am in Paris, and they lay their hands on me."

"The cardinal was then your protector?"

"The cardinal knew me; he knew certain particularities of me; I also

knew certain of him ; we appreciated each other mutually. And then, on rendering his soul to the devil, he would recommend Anne of Austria to make me the inhabitant of a safe place. Go then and find your father, relate the fact to him—and, adieu !”

“My dear Monsieur d’Artagnan,” said Raoul, very much agitated, after having looked out at the window, “you cannot even fly !”

“Why not ?”

“Because there is below an officer of the Swiss guards waiting for you.”

“Well !”

“Well, he will arrest you.”

D’Artagnan broke into an Homeric laugh.

“Oh ! I know very well that you will resist, that you will fight even ; I know very well that you will prove conqueror ; but that amounts to rebellion, and you are an officer yourself, knowing what discipline is.”

“Devil of a boy, how noble, how logical that is !” grumbled D’Artagnan.

“You approve of it, do you not ?”

“Yes, instead of passing into the street, where that oaf is waiting for me, I will slip quietly out at the back. I have a horse in the stable, and a good one. I will burst him, my means permit me to do so, and by killing one horse after another, I shall arrive at Boulogne in eleven hours ; I know the road. Only tell your father one thing.”

“What is that ?”

“That is—that that which he knows about is placed at Planchet’s house, except a fifth, and that——”

“But, my dear M. d’Artagnan, be assured that if you fly, two things will be said of you.”

“What are they, my dear friend ?”

“The first, that you have been afraid.”

“Ah ! and who will dare to say that ?”

“The king, the first.”

“Well ! but he will tell the truth,—I am afraid.”

“The second, that you felt yourself guilty.”

“Guilty of what ?”

“Why, of the crimes they wish to impute to you.”

“That is true again. So, then, you advise me to go and get myself made a prisoner in the Bastille ?”

“M. le Comte de la Fère would advise you just as I do.”

“*Pardieu !* I know he would,” said D’Artagnan thoughtfully. “You are right, I shall not escape. But if they cast me into the Bastille ?”

“We will get you out again,” said Raoul, with a quiet, calm air.

“*Mordioux !* You said that after a brave fashion, Raoul,” said D’Artagnan, seizing his hand ; “that savours of Athos, quite pure. Well, I will go, then. Do not forget my last word.”

“Except a fifth,” said Raoul.

“Yes, you are a fine boy ! and I wish you to add one thing to that last word.”

“Speak, chevalier !”

“It is that if you cannot get me out of the Bastille, and that I remain there—Oh ! that will be so, and I shall be a detestable prisoner ; I, who have been a passable man,—in that case, I give three-fifths to you, and the fourth to your father.”

“Chevalier !”

“*Mordioux !* If you will have some masses said for me, you are welcome.”

That being said, D'Artagnan took his belt from the hook, girded on his sword, took a hat the feather of which was fresh, and held his hand out to Raoul, who threw himself into his arms. When in the shop, he cast a quick glance at the shop-lads, who looked upon the scene with a pride mingled with some inquietude ; then plunging his hands into a chest of currants, he went straight to the officer who was waiting for him at the door.

"Those features ! Can it be you, Monsieur de Friedisch ?" cried D'Artagnan, gaily. "Eh ! eh ! what, do we arrest our friends ?"

"Arrest !" whispered the lads among themselves.

"Yes, it is I, Monsieur d'Artagnan ! Good-day to you !" said the Swiss, in his mountain *patois*.

"Must I give you up my sword ? I warn you, that it is long and heavy ; you had better let me wear it to the Louvre ; I feel quite lost in the streets without a sword, and you would be more at a loss than I should, with two."

"The king has given no orders about it," replied the Swiss, "so keep your sword."

"Well, that is very polite on the part of the king. Let us go, at once."

Monsieur Friedisch was not a talker, and D'Artagnan had too much to think about to be one. From Planchet's shop to the Louvre was not far—they arrived in ten minutes. It was dark night. M. de Friedisch wanted to enter by the wicket. "No," said D'Artagnan, "you would lose time by that ; take the little staircase."

The Swiss did as D'Artagnan advised, and conducted him to the vestibule of the king's cabinet. When arrived there, he bowed to his prisoner, and, without saying anything, returned to his post. D'Artagnan had not had time to ask why his sword was not taken from him, when the door of the cabinet opened, and a *valet-de-chambre* called, "M. D'Artagnan !" The musketeer assumed his parade carriage, and entered, with his large eyes wide open, his brow calm, his moustache stiff. The king was seated at a table writing. He did not disturb himself when the step of the musketeer resounded on the floor ; he did not even turn his head. D'Artagnan advanced as far as the middle of the room, and seeing that the king paid no attention to him, and suspecting besides, that that was nothing but affectation, a sort of tormenting preamble to the explanation which was preparing, he turned his back on the prince, and began to examine the frescoes on the cornices, and the cracks in the ceiling. This manœuvre was accompanied by this little tacit monologue. "Ah ! you want to humble me, do you ?—you, whom I have seen so young,—you, whom I have saved as I would my own child,—you, whom I have served as I would a God—that is to say, for nothing. Wait awhile ! wait awhile ! you shall see what a man can do who has snuffed the air of the fire of the Huguenots, under the beard of monsieur le cardinal—the true cardinal." At this moment Louis turned round.

"Ah, are you there, Monsieur d'Artagnan ?" said he.

D'Artagnan saw the movement, and imitated it. "Yes, sire," said he.

"Very well ; have the goodness to wait till I have cast this up."

D'Artagnan made no reply ; he only bowed. "That is polite enough," thought he ; "I have nothing to say."

Louis made a violent dash with his pen, and threw it angrily away.

"Ah, go on—work yourself up !" thought the musketeer ; "you will put me at my ease. You shall find I did not empty the bag, the other day, at Blois !"

Louis rose from his seat, passed his hand over his brow ; then, stopping opposite to D'Artagnan, he looked at him with an air at once imperious

and kind. "What the devil does he want with me? I wish he would begin!" thought the musketeer.

"Monsieur," said the king, "you know, without doubt, that Monsieur le Cardinal is dead?"

"I suspected so, sire."

"You know, that, consequently, I am master in my own kingdom?"

"That is not a thing that dates from the death of Monsieur le Cardinal, sire: a man is always master in his own house, when he wishes to be so."

"Yes; but do you remember all you said to me at Blois?"

"Now we come to it," thought D'Artagnan; "I was not deceived. Well, so much the better; it is a sign that my scent is tolerably keen yet."

"You do not answer me," said Louis.

"Sire, I think I recollect."

"You only think?"

"It is so long ago."

"If you do not remember, I do. You said to me—listen with attention."

"Ah, I shall listen with all my ears, sire; for it is very likely the conversation will turn in a fashion very interesting to me."

Louis once more looked at the musketeer. The latter smoothed the feather of his hat, then his moustache, and waited intrepidly. Louis XIV. continued, "You quitted my service, monsieur, after having told me the whole truth?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is, after having declared to me all you thought to be true with regard to my mode of thinking and acting. That is always a merit. You began by telling me that you had served my family thirty years, and were tired."

"I said so; yes, sire."

"And you afterwards admitted that that fatigue was a pretext, and that discontent was the real cause."

"I was discontented, in fact; but that discontent has never betrayed itself that I know of; and if, like a man of heart, I have spoken out before your majesty, I have not even thought of the matter in face of anybody else."

"Do not excuse yourself, D'Artagnan, but continue to listen to me. When making me the reproach that you were discontented, you received in reply a promise. Wait; is not that true?"

"Yes, sire, as true as what I told you."

"You answered me, 'Hereafter? No, now immediately.' Do not excuse yourself, I tell you. It was natural; but you had no charity for your poor prince, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

"Sire, charity for a king on the part of a poor soldier!"

"You understand me very well. You knew that I stood in need of it; you knew very well that I was not master; you knew very well that my hope was in the future. Now, you replied to me when I spoke of that future, 'My discharge, and that directly.'"

"That is true," murmured D'Artagnan, biting his moustache.

"You did not flatter me when I was in distress," added Louis.

"But," said D'Artagnan, raising his head nobly, "if I did not flatter your majesty when poor, neither did I betray you. I have shed my blood for nothing; I have watched like a dog at a door, knowing full well that neither bread nor bone would be thrown to me. I, although poor likewise, asked nothing of your majesty but the discharge you speak of."

"I know you are a brave man, but I was a young man and you ought

to have had some indulgence for me. What had you to reproach the king with—that he left King Charles II. without assistance? Let us say further—that he did not marry Mademoiselle de Mancini?” When saying these words, the king fixed upon the musketeer a searching look.

“Ah, ah!” thought the latter, “he is doing more than remembering; he is guessing. The devil!”

“Your sentence,” continued Louis, “fell upon the king and fell upon the man. But, Monsieur d’Artagnan, that weakness, for you considered it a weakness?”—D’Artagnan made no reply.—“You reproached me also with regard to monsieur the defunct cardinal. Now, monsieur le cardinal, did he not bring me up, did he not support me?—elevating himself and supporting himself at the same time, I admit; but the benefit was discharged. As an ingrate or an egotist, would you, then, have better loved me or served me?”

“Sire!”

“We will say no more about it, monsieur; it would only create you too many regrets, and me too much pain.”

D’Artagnan was not convinced. The young king, in adopting a tone of hauteur with him, did not forward his purpose.

“You have since reflected?” resumed Louis.

“Upon what, sire?” asked D’Artagnan, politely.

“Why, upon all that I have said to you, monsieur.”

“Yes, sire, no doubt——”

“And you have only waited for an opportunity of retracting your words?”

“Sire!”

“You hesitate, it seems.”

“I do not understand what your majesty did me the honour to say to me?”

Louis’s brow became cloudy.

“Have the goodness to excuse me, sire; my understanding is particularly thick; things do not penetrate it without difficulty; but it is true, when once they get in, they remain there.”

“Yes, yes; you appear to have a memory.”

“Almost as good a one as your majesty’s.”

“Then give me quickly one solution. My time is valuable. What have you been doing since your discharge?”

“Making my fortune, sire.”

“The expression is rude, Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

“Your majesty takes it in bad part, certainly. I entertain nothing but the profoundest respect for the king; and if I have been unpolite, which might be excused by my long sojourn in camps and barracks, your majesty is too much above me to be offended at a word innocently escaped from a soldier.”

“In fact, I know that you have performed a brilliant action in England, monsieur. I only regret that you have broken your promise.”

“I!” cried D’Artagnan.

“Doubtless. You engaged your word not to serve any other prince on quitting my service. Now, it was for King Charles II. that you undertook the marvellous carrying off of M. Monk.”

“Pardon me, sire; it was for myself.”

“And did you succeed?”

“Like the captains of the fifteenth century, *coups-de-main* and adventures.”

"What do you call succeeding?—a fortune?"

"A hundred thousand crowns, sire, which I possess—that is, in one week, the triple of all I ever had in money in fifty years."

"It is a handsome sum. But you are ambitious, I believe?"

"I, sire? The quarter of it would be a treasure, and I swear to you I have no thought of augmenting it."

"What! do you contemplate remaining idle?"

"Yes, sire."

"To quit the sword?"

"That is done."

"Impossible, Monsieur d'Artagnan!" said Louis, firmly.

"But, sire——"

"Well?"

"What for?"

"Because I will that you shall not!" said the young prince, in a voice so stern and imperious that D'Artagnan evinced surprise and even uneasiness.

"Will your majesty allow me one word of reply?" said he.

"Speak."

"I formed that resolution when I was poor and destitute."

"So be it. Go on."

"Now, when by my industry I have acquired a comfortable means of subsistence, would your majesty despoil me of my liberty? Your majesty would condemn me to the least, when I have gained the most."

"Who gave you permission, monsieur, to fathom my designs, or to reckon with me?" replied Louis, in a voice almost angry. "Who told you what I shall do, or what you will yourself do?"

"Sire," said the musketeer, quietly, "as far as I see, freedom is not the order of the conversation, as it was on the day we came to an explanation at Blois."

"No, monsieur; everything is changed."

"I make your majesty my sincere compliments upon that, but——"

"But you don't believe it?"

"I am not a great statesman, and yet I have my eye upon affairs; it seldom fails. Now, I do not see exactly as your majesty does, sire. The reign of Mazarin is over, but that of the financiers is begun. They have the money; your majesty will not often see much of it. To live under the paw of these hungry wolves is hard for a man who reckoned upon independence."

At this moment some one scratched at the door of the cabinet. The king raised his head proudly. "Your pardon, Monsieur d'Artagnan," said he; "it is M. Colbert, who comes to make me a report. Come in, M. Colbert."

D'Artagnan drew back. Colbert entered with papers in his hand, and went up to the king. There can be little doubt that the Gascon did not lose the opportunity of applying his keen, quick glance to the new figure which presented itself.

"Is the inquiry, then, made?"

"Yes, sire."

"And the opinion of the inquisitors?"

"Is that the accused merit confiscation and death."

"Ah, ah!" said the king, without changing countenance, and casting an oblique look at D'Artagnan. "And your own opinion, M. Colbert?" said he.

Colbert looked at D'Artagnan in his turn. That imposing countenance

checked the words upon his lips. Louis perceived this. "Do not disturb yourself," said he ; "it is M. d'Artagnan. Do you not know M. d'Artagnan again?"

These two men looked at each other—D'Artagnan with his eye open and bright, Colbert with his eye half-closed and dim. The frank intrepidity of the one displeased the other ; the cautious circumspection of the financier displeased the soldier. "Ah, ah ! this is the gentleman who made that brilliant stroke in England," said Colbert ; and he bowed slightly to D'Artagnan.

"Ah, ah !" said the Gascon, "this is the gentleman who clipped off the lace from the uniform of the Swiss ! A praiseworthy piece of economy !"

The financier thought to embarrass the musketeer ; but the musketeer ran the financier right through.

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," resumed the king, who had not remarked all the shades, of which Mazarin would not have missed one, "this concerns the farmers of the revenue who have robbed me, whom I am hanging, and whose death-warrants I am about to sign."

"Oh, oh !" said D'Artagnan, starting.

"What did you say?"

"Oh, nothing, sire ; this is no business of mine."

The king had already taken up the pen, and was applying it to the paper.

"Sire," said Colbert, in a subdued voice, "I beg to warn your majesty that, if an example be necessary, that example may find some difficulty in the execution."

"What do you say?" said Louis.

"You must not conceal from yourself," continued Colbert quietly, "that attacking the farmers-general is attacking the surintendance. The two unfortunate guilty men in question are the particular friends of a powerful personage, and the day of punishment, which otherwise might be stifled in the Châtelet, disturbances will arise without doubt."

Louis coloured and turned towards D'Artagnan, who took a slight bite at his moustache, not without a smile of pity for the financier, as likewise for the king, who had to listen to him so long. But Louis seized the pen, and, with a movement so rapid that his hand shook, he affixed his signature at the bottom of the two papers presented by Colbert ; then, looking the latter in the face, "Monsieur Colbert," said he, "when you speak to me of affairs, exclude more frequently the word difficulty from your reasonings and opinions ; as to the word impossibility, never pronounce it."

Colbert bowed, much humiliated at having undergone such a lesson before the musketeer : he was about to go out, but, jealous to repair his check : "I forgot to announce to your majesty," said he, "that the cor-fiscations amount to the sum of five millions of livres."

"That's pretty," thought D'Artagnan.

"Which makes in my coffers?" said the king.

"Eighteen millions of livres, sire," replied Colbert, bowing.

"*Mordieux !*" grumbled D'Artagnan, "that's glorious !"

"Monsieur Colbert," added the king, "you will, if you please, go through the gallery where M. Lyonne is waiting, and will tell him to bring hither what he has drawn up—by my order."

"Directly, sire ; if your majesty wants me no more this evening?"

"No, monsieur ; adieu !" And Colbert went out.

"Now, let us return to our affair, M. d'Artagnan," said the king, as if nothing had happened. "You see that with respect to money, there is already a notable change."

"Something like from zero to eighteen millions," replied the musketeer, gaily. "Ah! that was what your majesty wanted the day King Charles II. came to Blois. The two states would not have been embroiled to-day; for I must say, that there also I see another stumbling-block."

"Well, in the first place," replied Louis, "you are unjust, monsieur; for, if Providence had made me able to give my brother the million that day, you would not have quitted my service, and, consequently, you would not have made your fortune, as you told me just now you have done. But, in addition to this, I have had another piece of good fortune; and my difference with Great Britain need not alarm you."

A *valet de chambre* interrupted the king by announcing M. Lyonne. "Come in, monsieur," said the king; "you are punctual; that is like a good servant. Let us see your letter to my brother Charles II."

D'Artagnan pricked up his ears. "A moment, monsieur," said Louis, carelessly, to the Gascon; "I must expedite to London my consent to the marriage of my brother, M. le duc d'Anjou, with the Princess Henrietta Stuart."

"He is knocking me about, it seems," murmured D'Artagnan, whilst the king signed the letter, and dismissed M. de Lyonne; "but, *ma foi!* the more he knocks me about in this manner, the better I shall be pleased."

The king followed M. de Lyonne with his eyes, till the door was closed behind him; he even made three steps, as if he would follow the minister; but, after these three steps, stopping, pausing, and coming back to the musketeer,—"Now, monsieur," said he, "let us hasten to terminate our affair. You told me the other day, at Blois, that you were not rich?"

"But I am now, sire."

"Yes, but that does not concern me; you have your own money, not mine; that does not enter into my account."

"I do not well understand what your majesty means."

"Then, instead of leaving you to draw out your words, speak spontaneously. Should you be satisfied with twenty thousand livres a-year, as a fixed income?"

"But, sire," said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes to the utmost.

"Would you be satisfied with four horses furnished and kept, and with a supplement of funds, such as you should require, according to occasions and needs, or would you prefer a fixed sum which would be, for example, forty thousand livres? Answer."

"Sire, your majesty——"

"Yes, you are surprised, that is natural, and I expected it. Answer me, come! or I shall think you have no longer that rapidity of judgment I have so much admired in you."

"It is certain, sire, that twenty thousand livres a-year make a handsome sum; but——"

"No buts! Yes or no, is it an honourable indemnity?"

"Oh! certes——"

"You will be satisfied with it? Well, that is well. It will be better to reckon the extra expenses separately; you can arrange that with Colbert. Now, let us pass to something more important."

"But, sire, I told your majesty——"

"That you wanted rest, I know you did; only I replied that I would not allow it—I am master, I suppose?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is well. You were formerly in the way of becoming captain of the musketeers?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, here is your commission signed. I place it in this drawer. The day on which you shall return from a certain expedition which I have to confide to you, on that day you may yourself take the commission from the drawer. D'Artagnan still hesitated, and hung down his head. "Come, monsieur," said the king, "one would believe, to look at you, that you did not know that at the court of the most Christian king, the captain general of the musketeers takes precedence of the *maréchals* of France."

"Sire, I know he does."

"Then I must fancy you do not put faith in my word?"

"Oh! sire, never—never dream of such a thing."

"I have wished to prove to you, that you, so good a servant, had lost a good master; am I anything like the master that will suit you?"

"I begin to think you are, sire."

"Then, monsieur, you will resume your functions. Your company is quite disorganised since your departure, and the men go about drinking and rioting in the *cabarets*, where they fight, in spite of my edicts, or those of my father. You will reorganise the service as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sire."

"You will not again quit my person."

"Very well, sire."

"You will march with me to the army, you will encamp round my tent."

"Then, sire," said D'Artagnan, "if it is only to impose upon me a service like that, your majesty need not give me twenty thousand livres a-year. I shall not earn them."

"I desire that you shall keep open house; I desire that you should keep an open table; I desire that my captain of musketeers should be a personage."

"And I," said D'Artagnan bluntly, "I do not like easily found money. I like money won! Your majesty gives me an idle trade, which the first comer would perform for four thousand livres."

Louis XIV. began to laugh. "You are a true Gascon, Monsieur d'Artagnan, you will draw my heart's secret from me."

"Bah! has your majesty a secret, then?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well! then I accept the twenty thousand livres, for I will keep that secret, and discretion is above all price, in these times. Will your majesty speak now?"

"You will get booted, Monsieur d'Artagnan, and mount on horseback."

"Directly, sire."

"Within two days."

"That is well, sire; for I have my affairs to settle before I set out; particularly if it is likely there should be any blows stirring."

"That may happen."

"We can receive them! But, sire, you have addressed yourself to the avarice, to the ambition; you have addressed yourself to the heart of M. d'Artagnan, but you have forgotten one thing."

"What is that?"

"You have said nothing to his vanity; when shall I be a knight of the king's orders?"

"Does that interest you?"

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"YOU SHALL BE A KNIGHT OF MY ORDERS A MONTH AFTER YOU HAVE TAKEN  
YOUR COMMISSION OF CAPTAIN."

"Why, yes, sire. My friend Athos is quite covered with orders, and that dazzles me."

"You shall be a knight of my order a month after you have taken your commission of captain."

"Ah ! ah !" said the officer, thoughtfully, "after the expedition."

"Precisely."

"Where is your majesty going to send me?"

"Are you acquainted with Bretagne?"

"No, sire."

"Have you any friends there?"

"In Bretagne? No, *ma foi* !"

"So much the better. Do you know anything about fortifications?"

"I believe I do, sire," said D'Artagnan, smiling.

"That is to say, you can readily distinguish a fortress from a simple fortification, such as is allowed to *châtelains* or vassals?"

"I distinguish a fort from a rampart as I distinguish a cuirass from a raised pie-crust, sire. Is that sufficient?"

"Yes, monsieur. You will set out then?"

"For Bretagne?"—"Yes."

"Alone?"

"Absolutely alone. That is to say, you must not even take a lackey with you."

"May I ask your majesty for what reason?"

"Because, monsieur, it will be necessary to disguise yourself sometimes, as the servant of a good family. Your face is very well known in France, M. d'Artagnan."

"And then, sire?"

"And then you will travel slowly through Bretagne, and will examine carefully the fortifications of that country."

"The coasts?"

"Yes, and the isles ; commencing by Belle-Isle-en-Mer."

"Ah ! which belongs to M. Fouquet?" said D'Artagnan, in a serious tone, raising his intelligent eye to Louis XIV.

"I fancy you are right, monsieur, and that Belle-Isle does belong to M. Fouquet, in fact."

"Then your majesty wishes me to ascertain if Belle-Isle is a good place?"

"Yes."

"If the fortifications of it are new or old?"—"Precisely."

"And if the vassals of M. Fouquet are sufficiently numerous to form a garrison?"

"That is what I want to know ; you have placed your finger on the question."

"And if they are not fortifying, sire?"

"You will travel about Bretagne, listening and judging."

"Then I am a king's spy?" said D'Artagnan, bluntly, twisting his moustache.

"No, monsieur."

"Your pardon, sire ; I spy on your majesty's account."

"You go on a discovery, monsieur. Would you march at the head of your musketeers, with your sword in your hand, to observe any spot whatever, or an enemy's position?"

At this word D'Artagnan started.

"Do you," continued the king, "imagine yourself to be a spy?"

"No, no," said D'Artagnan, but pensively ; "the thing changes its face

when one observes an enemy : one is but a soldier. And if they are fortifying Belle-Isle?" added he, quickly.

"You will take an exact plan of the fortifications."

"Will they permit me to enter?"

"That does not concern me, that is your affair. Did you not understand that I reserved for you a supplement of twenty thousand livres per annum if you wished for it?"

"Yes, sire ; but if they are not fortifying?"

"You will return quietly, without fatiguing your horse."

"Sire, I am ready."

"You will begin to-morrow by going to monsieur le surintendant to take the first quarter of the pension I give you. Do you know M. Fouquet?"

"Very little, sire ; but I beg your majesty to observe that I don't think it very urgent that I should know him."

"I ask your pardon, monsieur ; for he will refuse you the money I wish you to take ; and it is that refusal I look for."

"Ah !" said D'Artagnan. "Next, sire?"

"The money being refused, you will go and seek it at M. Colbert's. *propas*, have you a good horse?"

"An excellent one, sire."

"How much did it cost you?"

"A hundred and fifty pistoles."

"I will buy it of you. Here is a note for two hundred pistoles."

"But I want my horse for my journey, sire."

"Well !"

"Well, and you take mine from me."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I give it you. Only as it is now mine and not yours, I am sure you will not spare it."

"Your majesty is in a hurry then?"

"A great hurry."

"Then what compels me to wait two days?"

"Reasons known to myself."

"That's a different affair. The horse may make up the two days, in the eight he has to do ; and then there is the post."

"No, no, the post compromises, Monsieur d'Artagnan. Begone, and do not forget you are mine."

"Sire, it was not I who ever forgot it. At what hour to-morrow shall I take my leave of your majesty?"

"Where do you lodge?"

"I must henceforward lodge at the Louvre."

"That must not be now—keep your lodgings in the city, I will pay for them. As to your departure, it must take place at night ; you must set out without being seen by any one, or, if you are seen, it must not be known that you belong to me. A close mouth, monsieur."

"Your majesty spoils all you have said by that single word."

"I asked you where you lodged, for I cannot always send to M. le comte de la Fère to seek you."

"I lodge with M. Planchet, a grocer, Rue des Lombards, at the sign of the Pilon d'Or."

"Go out but little, show yourself still less, and await my orders."

"And yet, sire, I must go for the money."

"That is true ; but, when going to the surintendance, where so many people are constantly going, you must mingle with the crowd."

"I want the notes, sire, for the money."

"Here they are." The king signed them, and D'Artagnan looked on to assure himself of the regularity.

"That is money," said he, "and money is either read or counted."

"Adieu ! Monsieur d'Artagnan," added the king ; "I think you have perfectly understood me."

"I ! I understood that your majesty sends me to Belle-Isle-en-Mer, that is all."

"To learn?"

"To learn how M. Fouquet's works are going on ; that is all."

"Very well : I admit you may be taken."

"And I do not admit it," replied the Gascon boldly.

"I admit that you may be killed," continued the king.

"That is not probable, sire."

"In the first case, you must not speak ; in the second, there must be no paper found upon you to speak."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders without ceremony, and took leave of the king, saying to himself :—"The English shower continues—let us remain under the spout !"

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## CHAPTER LIV.

### THE HOUSES OF M. FOUQUET.

WHILST D'Artagnan was returning to Planchet's house, his head aching and bewildered with all that had happened to him, there was passing a scene of quite a different character, and which, nevertheless, is not foreign to the conversation our musketeer had just had with the king ; only this scene took place out of Paris, in a house possessed by the surintendant Fouquet in the village of Saint-Mandé. The minister had just arrived at this country-house, followed by his principal clerk, who carried an enormous portfolio full of papers to be examined, and others waiting for signature. As it might be about five o'clock in the afternoon, the masters had dined : supper was being prepared for twenty subaltern guests. The surintendant did not stop : on alighting from his carriage, he, at the same bound, sprang through the doorway, traversed the apartments and gained his cabinet, where he declared he would shut himself up to work, commanding that he should not be disturbed for anything but an order from the king. As soon as this order was given, Fouquet shut himself up, and two footmen were placed as sentinels at his door. Then Fouquet pushed a bolt which displaced a panel that walled up the entrance, and prevented everything that passed in this apartment from being either seen or heard. But, against all probability, it was only for the sake of shutting himself up that Fouquet shut himself up thus, for he went straight to a bureau, seated himself at it, opened the portfolio, and began to make a choice in the enormous mass of papers it contained. It was not more than ten minutes after he had entered, and taken all the precautions we have described, when the repeated noise of several slight equal strokes struck his ear, and appeared to fix all his attention. Fouquet raised his head, turned his ear, and listened.

The little strokes continued. Then the worker arose with a slight movement of impatience and walked straight up to a glass behind which the blows were struck by a hand, or by some invisible mechanism. It was a large glass let into a panel. Three other glasses, exactly similar to it, com-

pleted the symmetry of the apartment. Nothing distinguished that from the others. Without doubt, these reiterated little strokes were a signal for, at the moment Fouquet approached the glass listening, the same noise was renewed, and in the same measure. "Oh! oh!" murmured the *intendant*, with surprise, "who is yonder? I did not expect anybody to day." And, without doubt, to respond to that signal, he pulled a gilded nail in that same glass, and shook it thrice. Then returning to his place and seating himself again—"Ma foi! Let them wait," said he. And plunging again into the ocean of papers unrolled before him, he appeared to think of nothing any longer but work. In fact, with incredible rapidity and marvellous lucidity, Fouquet deciphered the largest papers, and more complicated writings, correcting them, annotating them with a pen move as if by a fever; and the work melting under his hands, signatures, figure references, became multiplied as if ten clerks—that is to say, a hundred fingers and ten brains—had performed the duties, instead of the five fingers and single brain of this man. From time to time only, Fouquet, absorbed by his work, raised his head to cast a furtive glance upon a clock placed before him. The reason for this was, Fouquet set himself a task, and when this task was once set, in one hour's work he, by himself, did what another would not have accomplished in a day; always certain, consequently, provided he was not disturbed, to arrive at the end in the time his devouring activity had fixed. But in the midst of his ardent labour, the dry strokes upon the little bell, placed behind the glass, sounded again once more, hasty, and, consequently, more urgent.

"The lady appears to begin to be impatient," said Fouquet. "Humph! a calm! That must be the comtesse; but no, the comtesse is gone to Rambouillet for three days. The présidente, then? Oh! no, the présidente would not assume such grand airs; she would ring very humbly, then she would wait my good pleasure. The clearest of all is, that I may not know who it can be, but that I know who it cannot be. And since it is not you, marquise, since it cannot be you, deuce take the rest!" And he went on with his work in spite of the reiterated appeals of the bell. At the end of a quarter of an hour, however, impatience prevailed over Fouquet in his turn: he might be said to burn, rather than to complete the rest of his work; he thrust his papers into his portfolio, and giving a glance at the mirror, whilst the taps continued to be faster than ever. "Oh! oh!" said he, "whence comes all this racket? What has happened, and who can the Ariadne be who expects me so impatiently? Let us see!"

He then applied the tip of his finger to the nail parallel to the one he had drawn. Immediately the glass moved like the fold of a door and discovered a secret closet, rather deep, in which the surintendant disappeared as if going into a vast box. When there, he touched another spring, which opened not a board, but a block of the wall, and he went out by that opening, leaving the door to shut of itself. Then Fouquet descended about a score steps which sank, winding, underground, and came to a long, paved, subterranean passage, lighted by imperceptible loop-holes. The walls of this vault were covered with slabs, or tiles, and the floor with carpeting. This passage was under the street itself which separated Fouquet's house from the Park of Vincennes. At the end of the passage ascended a winding staircase parallel with that by which Fouquet had entered. He mounted these other stairs, entered by means of a spring placed in a closet similar to that in his cabinet, and from this closet into a chamber perfectly empty, although furnished with the utmost elegance. As soon as he entered, he examined carefully whether the glass closed without

ving any trace, and, doubtless, satisfied with his observation, he opened means of a small gold key, the triple fastenings of a door in front of. This time the door opened upon a handsome cabinet, sumptuously furnished, in which was seated upon cushions, a lady of surpassing beauty, and, at the sound of the lock, sprang towards Fouquet. "Ah! good heavens!" cried the latter, starting back with astonishment. "Madame Marquise de Bellière, you here?"

"Yes," murmured la marquise. "Yes; it is I, monsieur."

"Marquise! dear marquise!" added Fouquet, ready to prostrate himself. "Ah! my God! how did you come here? and I, to keep you waiting!"

"A long time, monsieur; yes, a very long time!"

"I am happy in thinking this waiting has appeared long to you, marquise!"

"Oh! an eternity, monsieur; oh! I rang more than twenty times. Did you not hear me?"

"Marquise, you are pale, you tremble."

"Did you not hear, then, that you were summoned?"

"Oh, yes; I heard plainly enough, madame; but I could not come. At your rigour and your refusal, how could I dream it was you? If I could have had any suspicion of the happiness that awaited me, believe me madame, I would have quitted everything to fall at your feet, as I do at this moment."

"Are we quite alone, monsieur?" asked the marquise, looking round the room.

"Oh, yes, madame, I can assure you of that."

"Really?" said the marquise, in a melancholy tone.

"You sigh," said Fouquet.

"What mysteries! what precautions!" said the marquise, with a slight bitterness of expression; "and how evident it is that you fear the least suspicion of your amours to escape."

"Would you prefer their being made public?"

"Oh, no; you act like a delicate man," said the marquise, smiling.

"Come, dear marquise, punish me not with reproaches, I implore you."

"Reproaches! Have I a right to make you any?"

"No, unfortunately, no; but tell me, you, who during a year I have loved without return or hope——"

"You are mistaken—without hope it is true, but not without return."

"What! for me, to my love! there is but one proof, and that proof I still want."

"I am come to bring it to you, monsieur."

Fouquet wished to clasp her in his arms, but she disengaged herself with a gesture.

"You persist in deceiving yourself, monsieur, and never will accept of me the only thing I am willing to give you—devotion."

"Ah, then, you do not love me? Devotion is but a virtue, love is a passion."

"Listen to me, I implore you: I should not have come hither without a serious motive: you are well assured of that, are you not?"

"The motive is of very little consequence, so that you are but here—so that I see you—so that I speak to you!"

"You are right; the principal thing is that I am here without any one having seen me, and that I can speak to you." Fouquet sank on his knees before her. "Speak! speak, madame!" said he, "I listen to you."

The marquise looked at Fouquet, on his knees at her feet, and there was in the looks of the woman a strange mixture of love and melancholy.

"Oh !" at length murmured she, "would that I were she who has the right of seeing you every minute, of speaking to you every instant ! would that I were she who might watch over you, she who would have no need of mysterious springs to summon and cause to appear, like a sylph, the man she loves, to look at him for an hour, and then see him disappear into the darkness of a mystery, still more strange at his going out than it has been at his coming in. Oh ! that would be to be a happy woman !"

"Do you happen, marquise," said Fouquet, smiling, "to be speaking of my wife ?"

"Yes, certainly, of her I spoke."

"Well, you need not envy her lot, marquise ; of all the women with whom I am in relation, Madame Fouquet is the one I see the least of, and who has the least intercourse with me."

"At least, monsieur, she is not reduced to place, as I have done, her hand upon the ornament of a glass to call you to her ; at least you do not reply to her by the mysterious, frightful sound of a bell, the spring of which comes from I don't know where ; at least you have not forbidden her to endeavour to discover the secret of these communications under pain of breaking off for ever your connexions with her, as you have forbidden all who have come here before me, and all who shall come after me."

"Dear marquise, how unjust you are, and how little do you know what you are doing in thus exclaiming against mystery ; it is with mystery alone we can love without trouble ; it is with love without trouble alone that we can be happy. But let us return to ourselves, to that devotion of which you were speaking, or rather let me labour under a pleasing delusion, and believe that this devotion is love."

"Just now," repeated the marquise, passing over her eyes a hand that might have been a model for the graceful contours of antiquity ; "just now I was prepared to speak, my ideas were clear, bold, now I am quite confused, quite troubled ; I fear I bring you bad news."

"If it is to that bad news I owe your presence, marquise, welcome be that bad news ! or rather, marquise, since you allow that I am not quite indifferent to you, let me hear nothing of the bad news, but speak of yourself."

"No, no, on the contrary, demand it of me ; require me to tell it to you instantly, and not to allow myself to be turned aside by any feeling whatever. Fouquet, my friend ! it is of immense importance !"

"You astonish me, marquise : I will even say you almost frighten me. You, so serious, so collected ; you who know the world we live in so well. Is it then important ?"

"Oh ! very important."

"In the first place, how did you come here ?"

"You shall know that presently ; but first to something of more consequence."

"Speak, marquise, speak ! I implore you, have pity on my impatience."

"Do you know that Colbert is made intendant of the finances ?"

"Bah ! Colbert, little Colbert."

"Yes, Colbert, little Colbert."

"Mazarin's factotum ?"—"The same."

"Well ! what do you see so terrific in that, dear marquise ? little Colbert is intendant : that is astonishing, I confess, but is not terrific."

"Do you think the king has given, without a pressing motive, such a place to one you call a little *cuisire*?"

"In the first place, is it positively true that the king has given it to him?"

"It is so said."

"Ay, but who says so?"

"Everybody."

"Everybody, that's nobody: mention some one likely to be well informed who says so."

"Madame Vanel."

"Ah! now you begin to frighten me in earnest," said Fouquet, laughing; "if any one is well informed, or ought to be well informed, it is the person you name."

"Do not speak ill of poor Marguerite, Monsieur Fouquet, for she still loves you."

"Bah! indeed. That is scarcely credible. I thought little Colbert, as you said just now, had passed over that love, and left the impression upon it of a spot of ink or a stain of grease."

"Fouquet! Fouquet! Is this the way you always are for the poor women you desert?"

"Why, you surely are not going to undertake the defence of Madame Vanel?"

"Yes, I will undertake it; for, I repeat, she loves you still, and the proof is she saves you."

"By your interposition, marquise; that is very cunning on her part. No angel could be more agreeable to me, or could lead me more certainly to salvation. But, let me ask you, do you know Marguerite?"

"She was my convent friend."

"And you say that she has informed you that Monsieur Colbert was named intendant?"

"Yes, she did."

"Well, enlighten me, marquise; granted Monsieur Colbert is intendant, so be it. In what can an intendant, that is to say, my subordinate, my clerk, give me umbrage or injure me, even were he Monsieur Colbert?"

"You do not reflect, monsieur, apparently," replied the marquise.

"Upon what?"—"This: that Monsieur Colbert hates you."

"Hates me!" cried Fouquet. "Good heavens! marquise, whence do you come? where can you live! Hates me! why all the world hates me, he as others do."

"He more than others."

"More than others—let him."

"He is ambitious."

"Who is not, marquise?"

"Yes, but with him ambition has no bounds."

"I am quite aware of that, since he made it a point to succeed me with Madame Vanel."

"And obtained his end: look to that."

"Do you mean to say he has the presumption to hope to pass from intendant to surintendant?"

"Have you not yourself already had the same fear?"

"Oh! oh!" said Fouquet, "to succeed with Madame Vanel is one thing, to succeed me with the king is another. France is not to be purchased so easily as the wife of a *maître des comptes*."

"Eh! monsieur, everything is to be bought; if not by gold, by intrigue."

"Nobody knows to the contrary better than you, madame, you to whom I have offered millions."

"Instead of millions, Fouquet, you should have offered me a true, only, and boundless love : I might have accepted that. So you see still, everything is to be bought, if not in one way, by another."

"So Colbert, in your opinion, is in a fair way of bargaining for my place of surintendant. Make yourself easy on that head, my dear marquise, he is not yet rich enough to purchase it."

"But if he should rob you of it?"

"Ah ! that is another thing. Unfortunately, before he can reach me ; that is to say, the body of the place, he must destroy, must make a breach in the advanced works, and I am devilishly well fortified, marquise."

"What you call your advanced works are your creatures, are they not—your friends?"

"Exactly so."

"And is M. d'Eymeris one of your creatures?"

"Yes, he is."

"Is M. Lyodot one of your friends?"

"Certainly."

"M. de Vanin?"

"M. de Vanin ! ah ! they may do what they like with him, but——"

"But——"

"But they must not touch the others."

"Well, if you are anxious they should not touch MM. d'Eymeris and Lyodot, it is time to look about you."

"Who threatens them?"

"Will you listen to me now?"

"Attentively, marquise."

"Without interrupting me?"——"Speak."

"Well, this morning Marguerite sent for me."

"And what did she want with you?"

"I dare not see M. Fouquet myself," said she."

"Bah ! why should she think I would reproach her ? Poor woman, she vastly deceives herself."

"See him yourself," said she, 'and tell him to beware of M. Colbert.'"

"What ! she warned me to beware of her lover?"

"I have told you she still loves you."

"Go on, marquise."

"M. Colbert," she added, 'came to me two hours ago, to inform me he was appointed intendant.'"

"I have already told you, marquise, that M. Colbert would only be the more in my power for that."

"Yes, but that is not all ; Marguerite is intimate, as you know, with Madame d'Eymeris and Madame Lyodot."

"I know she is."

"Well, M. Colbert put many questions to her relative to the fortunes of those two gentlemen, and as to the devotion they had for you."

"Oh, as to those two, I can answer for them ; they must be killed before they can cease to be mine."

"Then, as Madame Vanel was obliged to quit M. Colbert for an instant to receive a visitor, and as M. Colbert is industrious, scarcely was the new intendant left alone, before he took a pencil from his pocket, and, as there was paper on the table, began to make pencil notes."

"Notes concerning D'Eymeris and Lyodot?"

"Exactly."—"I should like to know what those notes were about."

"And that is just what I have brought you."

"Madame Vanel has taken Colbert's notes and sent them to me?"

"No ; but by a chance which resembles a miracle, she has a duplicate of those notes."

"How could she get that?"

"Listen : I told you that Colbert found some paper on the table."

"Yes."

"That he had taken a pencil from his pocket."—"Yes."

"And had written upon that paper."—"Yes."

"Well, this pencil was a lead pencil, consequently hard ; so, it marked in black upon the first sheet, and in white upon the second."

"Go on."

"Colbert, when tearing off the first sheet, took no notice of the second."

"Well?"

"Well, on the second was to be read what had been written on the first ; Madame Vanel read it, and sent for me."—"Ay, ay?"

"Then, when she was assured I was your devoted friend, she gave me the paper, and told me the secret of that house."

"And this paper?" said Fouquet, in some degree of agitation.

"Here it is, monsieur—read it," said the marquise. Fouquet read :—Names of the farmers of the revenue to be condemned by the Chamber of Justice : D'Eymeris, friend of M. F. ; Lyodot, friend of M. F. ; De Vanin, indif."

"D'Eymeris and Lyodot !" cried Fouquet, reading the paper eagerly again.

"Friends of M. F.," pointed the marquise with her finger.

"But what is the meaning of these words : 'To be condemned by the Chamber of Justice?'"

"*Dame !*" said the marquise, "that is clear enough, I think. Besides, that is not all. Read on, read on ;" and Fouquet continued:—"The two first to death, the third to be dismissed, with MM. d'Hautemont and de la Valette, who will only have their property confiscated."

"Great God !" cried Fouquet, "to death, to death ! Lyodot and D'Eymeris. But even if the Chamber of Justice should condemn them to death, the king will never ratify their condemnation, and they cannot be executed without the king's signature."

"The king has made M. Colbert intendant."

"Oh !" cried Fouquet, as if he caught a glimpse of a yawning abyss beneath his feet, "impossible ! impossible ! But who passed a pencil over the marks made by Colbert?"

"I did. I was afraid the first would be effaced."

"Oh ! I will know all."

"You will know nothing, monsieur ; you despise your enemy too much for that."

"Pardon me, my dear marquise ; excuse me ; yes, M. Colbert is my enemy, I believe him to be so ; yes, M. Colbert is a man to be dreaded, I admit. But I ! I have time, and as you are here, as you have assured me of your devotion, as you have allowed me to hope for your love, as we are alone——"

"I came here to save you, M. Fouquet, and not to ruin myself," said the marquise, rising,—"*therefore, beware !——*"

"Marquise, in truth you terrify yourself too much, at least, unless this terror is but a pretext——"

"He has a deep heart, that M. Colbert : beware !"——Fouquet, in his turn, drew himself up. "And I?" asked he.

"And you, you have only a noble heart. Beware ! beware !"

"So?"

"I have done what I ought, my friend, at the risk of my reputation Adieu !"

"Not adieu, *au revoir*."

"Perhaps," said the marquise, giving her hand to Fouquet to kiss, and walking towards the door, with so firm a step, that he did not dare to bar her passage. As to Fouquet, he retook, with his head hanging down, and a cloud over his brow, the path of the subterranean passage along which ran the metal wires that communicated from one house to the other, transmitting, through two glasses, the wishes and signals of two correspondents.

## CHAPTER LV.

### THE ABBÉ FOUQUET.

FOUQUET hastened back to his apartment by the subterranean passage and immediately closed the mirror with the spring. He was scarcely in his closet, when he heard some one knocking violently at the door, and a well-known voice crying,—“Open the door, monseigneur, I entreat you open the door !” Fouquet quickly restored a little order to everything which might reveal either his absence or his agitation ; he spread his papers over the desk, took up a pen, and, to gain time, said, through the closed door,—“Who are you ?”

“What, monseigneur, do you not know me ?” replied the voice.

“Yes, yes,” said Fouquet to himself, “yes, my friend, I know you well enough.” And then aloud : “Is it not Gourville ?”

“Why, yes, monseigneur.”

Fouquet arose, cast a last look at one of his glasses, went to the door, pushed the bolt, and Gourville entered. “Ah, monseigneur ! monseigneur !” cried he, “what cruelty !”

“In what ?”

“I have been a quarter of an hour imploring you to open the door, and you would not even answer me.”

“Once for all, you know that I will not be disturbed when I am busy. Now, although I might make you an exception, Gourville, I insist upon my orders being respected by others.”

“Monseigneur, at this moment, orders, doors, bolts, locks, and walls, I could have broken, overthrown, and split them all !”

“Ah ! ah ! it relates to some great event, then ?” asked Fouquet.

“Oh ! I assure you it does, monseigneur,” replied Gourville.

“And what is this event ?” said Fouquet, a little troubled by the evident agitation of his most intimate confidant.

“There is a secret chamber of justice instituted, monseigneur.”

“I know there is, but do the members meet, Gourville ?”

“They not only meet, but they have passed a sentence, monseigneur.”

“A sentence ?” said the surintendant, with a shudder and pallor he could not conceal. “A sentence !—and against whom ?”

“Against two of your friends.”

“Lyodot and D'Eymeris, do you mean ? But what sort of a sentence ?”

"Sentence of death."

"Passed? Oh! you must be mistaken, Gourville; that is impossible."

"Here is a copy of the sentence which the king is to sign to-day, if he has not already signed it."

Fouquet seized the paper eagerly, read it, and returned it to Gourville.

"The king will never sign that," said he. Gourville shook his head.

"Monseigneur, M. Colbert is a bold councillor, do not trust to that."

"Monsieur Colbert again!" cried Fouquet. "How is it that that name rises upon all occasions to torment my ears, during the last two or three days? You make so trifling a subject of too much importance, Gourville. Let M. Colbert appear, I will face him; let him raise his head, and I will crush him; but you understand, there must be an asperity upon which my look may fall, there must be a surface upon which my feet may be placed."

"Patience, monseigneur; for you do not know what Colbert is—study him quickly; it is with this dark financier as it is with meteors, which the eye never sees completely before their disastrous invasion; when we feel them we are dead."

"Oh! Gourville, that is going too far," replied Fouquet, smiling; "allow me, my friend, not to be so easily frightened; M. Colbert a meteor! *Corbleu*, we confront the meteor. Let us see acts, and not words. What has he done?"

"He has ordered two gibbets of the executioner of Paris," answered Gourville.

Fouquet raised his head, and a flash seemed to strike his eyes. "Are you sure of what you say?" cried he.

"Here is the proof, monseigneur." And Gourville held out to the surintendant a note communicated by one of the secretaries of the Hôtel de Ville, who was one of Fouquet's creatures.

"Yes, that is true," murmured the minister; "the scaffold may be prepared, but the king has not signed; Gourville, the king will not sign."

"I will soon know," said Gourville.

"How?"

"If the king has signed, the gibbets will be sent this evening to the Hôtel de Ville, in order to be got up and ready by to-morrow morning."

"Oh! no, no!" cried the surintendant, once again; "you are all deceived, and deceive me in my turn; Lyodot came to see me only the day before yesterday; only three days ago I received a present of some Syracuse wine from poor D'Eymeris."

"What does that prove?" replied Gourville, "except that the chamber of justice has been secretly assembled, has deliberated in the absence of the accused, and that the whole proceeding was complete when they were arrested."

"What! are they then arrested?"

"No doubt they are."

"But where, when, how have they been arrested?"

"Lyodot, yesterday, at daybreak; D'Eymeris, the day before yesterday, in the evening, as he was returning from the house of his mistress: their disappearance had disturbed nobody; but at length M. Colbert, all at once raised the mask, and caused the affair to be published; it is being cried by sound of trumpet, at this moment, in Paris, and, in truth, monseigneur, there is scarcely anybody but yourself ignorant of the event." Fouquet began to walk about his chamber with an uneasiness that became more and more serious.

"What do you decide upon, monseigneur?" said Gourville.

"If it really were as you say, I would go to the king," cried Fouquet. "But as I go to the Louvre, I will pass by the Hôtel de Ville. We shall see if the sentence is signed."

"Incredulity! thou art the pest of all great minds," said Gourville, shrugging his shoulders.

"Gourville."

"Yes," continued he, "and incredulity! thou ruinest them, as contagion destroys the most robust health; that is to say, in an instant."

"Let us go," cried Fouquet; "desire the door to be opened, Gourville."

"Be cautious," said the latter, "the Abbé de Fouquet is there."

"Ah! my brother," replied Fouquet, in a tone of annoyance; "he is there, is he? he knows all the ill news, then, and is rejoiced to bring it to me, as usual. The devil! if my brother is there, my affairs are bad, Gourville; why did you not tell me that sooner, I should have been the more readily convinced."

"Monseigneur calumniates him," said Gourville, laughing; "if he is come, it is not with a bad intention."

"What, do you excuse him?" cried Fouquet; "a fellow without a heart, without ideas; a devourer of wealth."

"He knows you are rich."

"And would ruin me."

"No, but he would like to have your purse. That is all."

"Enough! enough! A hundred thousand crowns per month, during two years. *Corbleu!* it is I that pay, Gourville, and I know my figures." Gourville laughed in a silent, sly manner. "Yes, yes, you mean to say it is the king pays," said the surintendant. "Ah, Gourville, that is a vile joke; this is not the place."

"Monseigneur, do not be angry."

"Well, then, send away the Abbé Fouquet, I have not a sou." Gourville made a step towards the door. "He has been a month without seeing me," continued Fouquet, "why could he not be two months?"

"Because he repents of living in bad company," said Gourville, "and prefers you to all his bandits."

"Thanks for the preference! You make a strange advocate, Gourville, to-day—the advocate of the Abbé Fouquet!"

"Eh! but everything and every man has a good side—their useful side, monseigneur."

"The bandits whom the abbé keeps in pay and drink have their useful side, have they? Prove that, if you please."

"Let the circumstance arise, monseigneur, and you will be very glad to have these bandits under your hand."

"You advise me, then, to be reconciled to the abbé?" said Fouquet, ironically.

"I advise you, monseigneur, not to quarrel with a hundred or a hundred and twenty loose fellows, who, by putting their rapiers end to end, would form a cordon of steel capable of surrounding three thousand men."

Fouquet darted a searching glance at Gourville, and passing before him,—"That is all very well; let M. l'Abbé Fouquet be introduced," said he to the footman. "You are right, Gourville." Two minutes after, the Abbé Fouquet appeared in the doorway, with profound reverences. He was a man of from forty to forty-five years of age, half churchman, half soldier,—a *spadassin* grafted upon an abbé; upon seeing that he had not

a sword by his side, you might be sure he had pistols. Fouquet saluted him more as an elder brother than as a minister.

"What can I do to serve you, monsieur l'abbé?" said he.

"Oh! oh! how you speak that to me, brother!"

"I speak it like a man who is in a hurry, monsieur."

The abbé looked maliciously at Gourville, and anxiously at Fouquet, and said, "I have three hundred pistoles to pay to M. de Bregi this evening. A play debt, a sacred debt."

"Next," said Fouquet bravely, for he comprehended that the Abbé Fouquet would not have disturbed him for such a want.

"A thousand to my butcher, who will supply no more."

"Next?"

"Twelve hundred to my tailor," continued the abbé; "the fellow has made me take back seven suits of my people's, which compromises my liveries, and my mistress talks of replacing me by a farmer of the revenue, which would be a humiliation for the church."

"What else is there?" said Fouquet.

"You will please to remark," said the abbé humbly, "that I have asked nothing for myself."

"That is delicate, monsieur," replied Fouquet; "so, as you see, I wait."

"And I ask nothing, oh! no,—it is not for want of need, though, I assure you."

The minister reflected a minute. "Twelve hundred pistoles to the tailor; that seems a great deal for clothes," said he.

"I maintain a hundred men," said the abbé proudly; "that is a charge, I believe."

"Why a hundred men?" said Fouquet. "Are you a Richelieu or a Mazarin, to require a hundred men as a guard? What use do you make of these hundred men?—speak—say."

"And do you ask me that?" cried the Abbé Fouquet; "ah! how can you put such a question,—why I maintain a hundred men? Ah!"

"Why, yes, I do put that question to you. What have you to do with a hundred men?—answer."

"Ingrate!" continued the abbé, more and more affected.

"Explain yourself."

"Why, monsieur the surintendant, I only want one *valet-de-chambre*, for my part, and even if I were alone, could help myself very well; but you, you who have so many enemies—a hundred men are not enough for me to defend you with. A hundred men!—you ought to have ten thousand. I maintain, then, these men in order that in public places, in assemblies, no voice may be raised against you; and without them, monsieur, you would be loaded with imprecations, you would be torn to pieces, you would not last a week, no, not a week; do you understand?"

"Ah! I did not know you were my champion to such an extent, monsieur l'abbé."

"You doubt it!" cried the abbé. "Listen, then, to what happened, not longer ago than yesterday, Rue de la Hochette. A man was cheapening a fowl."

"Well, how could that injure me, abbé?"

"This way. The fowl was not fat. The purchaser refused to give eighteen sous for it, saying that he could not afford eighteen sous for the skin of a fowl, of which M. Fouquet had had all the fat?"

"Go on."

"The joke caused a deal of laughter," continued the abbé; "laughter

at your expense, death to all the devils ! and the *canaille* were delighted. The joker added, 'Give me a fowl fed by M. Colbert, if you like, and I will pay all you ask.' And immediately there was a clapping of hands. A frightful scandal ! you understand ; a scandal which forces a brother to hide his face."

Fouquet coloured. "And you veiled it?" said the surintendant.

"No, for it so happened I had one of my men in the crowd ; a new recruit from the provinces, one M. de Menneville, whom I like very much. He made his way through the press, saying to the joker : '*Mille barbes !* Monsieur the false joker ; here's a thrust for Colbert !' 'And one for Fouquet,' replied the joker. Upon which they drew, in front of the cook's shop, with a hedge of the curious round them, and five hundred as curious at the windows."

"Well?" said Fouquet.

"Well, monsieur, my Menneville spitted the joker, to the great astonishment of the spectators, and said to the cook : 'Take this goose, my friend, it is fatter than your fowl.' That is the way, monsieur," ended the abbé triumphantly, "in which I spend my revenues ; I maintain the honour of the family, monsieur." Fouquet hung his head. "And I have a hundred as good as he," continued the abbé.

"Very well," said Fouquet, "give the account to Gourville, and remain here this evening."

"Shall we have supper?"

"Yes, there will be supper."

"But the chest is closed."

"Gourville will open it for you. Leave us, monsieur l'abbé, leave us."

"Then we are friends," said the abbé, with a bow.

"Oh yes, friends. Come, Gourville."

"Are you going out ? You will not sup, then?"

"I shall be back in an hour ; be contented, abbé." Then, aside to Gourville—"Let them put to my English horses," said he, "and direct the coachman to stop at the Hôtel de Ville de Paris."

## CHAPTER LVI.

### THE WINE OF M. DE LA FONTAINE.

CARRIAGES were already bringing the guests of Fouquet to Saint-Mandé ; already the whole house was getting warm with the preparations for supper, when the surintendant launched his fleet horses upon the road to Paris, and going by the quays in order to meet with fewer people on his route, reached the Hôtel de Ville. It wanted a quarter to eight. Fouquet alighted at the corner of the Rue de Long-pont, and, on foot, directed his course towards the Place de Grève, accompanied by Gourville. At the turning of the Place, they saw a man dressed in black and violet, of good mien, who was preparing to get into a hired carriage, and told the coachman to stop at Vincennes. He had before him a large hamper filled with bottles, which he had just purchased at the *cabaret* with the sign of "L'Image-de-Nôtre-Dame."

"Eh ! but that is Vatel ! my *maître d'hôtel* !" said Fouquet to Gourville.

"Yes, monseigneur," replied the latter.

"What can he have been doing at the sign of L'Image-de-Nôtre Dame?"

"Buying wine, no doubt."

"What ! buy wine for me, at a *cabaret* !" said Fouquet. "My cellar then must be in a miserable condition !" and he advanced towards the *maître d'hôtel*, who was arranging his bottles in the carriage, with the most minute care.

"*Holà ! Vatel*," said he, in the voice of a master.

"Take care, monseigneur !" said Gourville, "you will be recognised."

"Very well ! Of what consequence ?—*Vatel* !" The man dressed in black and violet turned round. He had a good and mild countenance, without expression—a mathematician, less the pride. A certain fire sparkled in the eyes of this personage, a smile rather sly played round his lips ; but the observer might soon have remarked that this fire and this smile applied to nothing, enlightened nothing. *Vatel* laughed like an absent man, and amused himself like a child. At the sound of his master's voice, he turned round, exclaiming : "Oh ! monseigneur !"

"Yes, it is I. What the devil are you doing here, *Vatel* ! Wine ! You are buying wine at a *cabaret* in the Place de Grève !"

"But, monseigneur," said *Vatel*, quietly, after having darted a hostile glance at Gourville, "why am I interfered with here ? Is my cellar kept in bad order ?"

"No, certes, *Vatel*, no ; but——"

"But what ?" replied *Vatel*. Gourville touched the elbow of Fouquet.

"Don't be angry, *Vatel* ; I thought my cellar—your cellar—sufficiently well stocked for us to be able to dispense with having recourse to the cellar of L'Image-de-Nôtre-Dame."

"Eh, monsieur," said *Vatel*, sinking from monseigneur to monsieur with a degree of disdain ; "your cellar is so well stocked that when certain of your guests dine with you they have nothing to drink."

Fouquet, in great surprise, looked at Gourville. "What do you mean by that ?"

"I mean that your butler had not wines for all tastes, monsieur ; and that M. de la Fontaine, M. Pellisson, and M. Conrard, do not drink when they come to the house—those messieurs do not like strong wine. What is to be done then ?"

"Well, and so ?"

"Well, then, I have found here a *vin de Joigny*, which they like. I know they come once a week to drink at the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame. That is the reason why I make this provision."

Fouquet had no more to say, he was almost affected. *Vatel*, on his part, had much more to say, without doubt, and it was plain he was getting warm. "It is just as if you would reproach me, monseigneur, for going to the Rue Planche Milbray, to fetch, myself, the cider M. Loret drinks when he comes to dine at your house."

"Loret drinks cider at my house !" cried Fouquet laughing.

"Certainly he does, monsieur, and that is the reason why he dines there with pleasure."

"*Vatel*," cried Fouquet, pressing the hand of his *maître d'hôtel*, "you are a man ! I thank you, *Vatel*, for having understood that at my house M. de la Fontaine, M. Conrard, and M. Loret, are as great as dukes and peers, as great as princes, greater than myself. *Vatel*, you are a good servant, and I double your salary."

*Vatel* did not even thank his master, he merely shrugged his shoulders a little, murmuring this superb sentiment : "To be thanked for having done one's duty is humiliating."

"He is right," said Gourville, as he drew Fouquet's attention, by a

gesture, to another point. He showed him a low-built carriage, drawn by two horses, upon which rocked two strong gibbets, bound together back to back by chains, whilst an archer, seated upon the thickness of the post, underwent, as well as he could, with his head cast down, the comments of a hundred vagabonds, who guessed the destination of the gibbets, and escorted them to the Hôtel de Ville. Fouquet started. "It is decided, you see," said Gourville.

"But it is not done," replied Fouquet.

"Oh, do not flatter yourself, monseigneur; if they have thus lulled your friendship and suspicions—if things have gone so far, you will undo nothing."

"But I have not ratified."

"M. de Lyonne has ratified for you."

"I will go to the Louvre."

"Oh, no, you will not."

"Would you advise such baseness?" cried Fouquet, "would you advise me to abandon my friends? would you advise me, whilst able to fight, to throw the arms I have in my hand to the ground?"

"I do not advise you to do anything of the kind, monseigneur. Are you in a position to quit the post of surintendant at this moment?"

"No."

"Well, if the king wishes to displace you——"

"He will displace me absent as well as present."

"Yes, but you will never have insulted him."

"Yes, but I shall have been base; now, I am not willing that my friends should die; and they shall not die!"

"For that it is necessary you should go to the Louvre."

"Gourville!"

"Beware! once at the Louvre, where you will be forced to defend your friends openly, that is to say, to make a profession of faith; or you will be forced to abandon them irrevocably."

"Never."

"Pardon me;—the king will propose the alternative to you, rigorously, or else you will propose it to him yourself."

"That is true."

"That is the reason why conflict must be avoided. Let us return to Saint-Mandé, monseigneur."

"Gourville, I will not stir from this place, where the crime is to be carried out, where my disgrace is to be accomplished; I will not stir, I say, till I have found some means of combating my enemies."

"Monseigneur," replied Gourville, "you would excite my pity, if I did not know you for one of the great spirits of this world. You possess a hundred and fifty millions, you are equal to the king in position, and a hundred and fifty millions his superior in money. M. Colbert has not even had the wit to have the testament of Mazarin accepted. Now, when a man is the richest person in a kingdom, and will take the trouble to spend the money, if that be done which he does not like, it is because he is a poor man. Let us return to Saint-Mandé, I say."

"To consult with Pellisson?—we will."

"No, monseigneur; to count your money."

"So be it," said Fouquet, with his eyes inflamed;—"yes, yes, to Saint-Mandé!" He got into his carriage again, and Gourville with him. Upon their road, at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, they overtook the humble equipage of Vatel, who was quietly conveying along his *vin de*

*Joigny*. The black horses, going at a swift pace, alarmed, as they passed the timid hack of the *maître d'hôtel*, who, putting his head out at the window, cried, in a fright, "Take care of my bottles!"

## CHAPTER LVII.

## THE GALLERY OF SAINT-MANDÉ.

FIFTY persons were waiting for the surintendant. He did not even take the time to place himself in the hands of his *valet de chambre* for a minute, but from the *perron* went straight into the *premier salon*. There his friends were assembled in full chat. The intendant was about to order supper to be served, but, above all, the Abbé Fouquet watched the return of his brother, and was endeavouring to do the honours of the house in his absence. Upon the arrival of the surintendant, a murmur of joy and affection was heard: Fouquet, full of affability, good humour, and munificence, was beloved by his poets, his artists, and his men of business. His brow, upon which his little court read, as upon that of a god, all the movements of his soul, and thence drew rules of conduct,—his brow, upon which affairs of state never impressed a wrinkle, was this evening paler than usual, and more than one friendly eye remarked that paleness. Fouquet placed himself at the head of the table, and presided gaily during supper. He recounted Vatel's expedition to La Fontaine; he related the history of Menneville and the thin fowl to Pellisson, in such a manner, that all the table heard it. A tempest of laughter and jokes ensued, which was only checked by a serious and even sad gesture from Pellisson. The Abbé Fouquet, not being able to comprehend why his brother should have led the conversation in that direction, listened with all his ears, and sought in the countenance of Gourville, or in that of his brother, an explanation which nothing afforded him. Pellisson took up the matter:—"Did they mention M. Colbert, then?" said he.

"Why not?" replied Fouquet; "if true, as it is said to be, that the king has made him his intendant?" Scarcely had Fouquet uttered these words, with a marked intention, than an explosion broke forth among the guests.

"The miser!" said one.

"The mean, pitiful fellow!" said another.

"The hypocrite!" said a third.

Pellisson exchanged a meaning look with Fouquet. "Messieurs," said he, "in truth we are abusing a man whom no one knows: it is neither charitable nor reasonable; and here is monsieur le surintendant, who, I am sure, agrees with me."

"Entirely," replied Fouquet. "Let the fat fowls of M. Colbert alone; our business to-day is with the *faisans truffés* of M. Vatel." This speech stopped the dark cloud which was beginning to throw its shade over the guests. Gourville succeeded so well in animating the poets with the *vin de Joigny*; the abbé, intelligent as a man who stands in need of the crowns of another, so enlivened the financiers and men of the sword, that, amidst the vapours of this joy and the noise of conversation, the object of inquietudes disappeared completely. The testament of Cardinal Mazarin was the text of the conversation at the second course and dessert; then Fouquet ordered basins of confitures and fountains of liqueurs to be carried into the *salon* adjoining the gallery. He led the way thither, conducting by the hand a lady, the queen, by his preference, of the evening. The musicians then supped, and the promenades in the gallery and the gardens

commenced, beneath a spring sky, mild and perfumed. Pellisson then approached the surintendant, and said: "Something troubles mon-seigneur?"

"Greatly," replied the minister; "ask Gourville to tell you what it is." Pellisson, on turning round, found La Fontaine treading upon his heels. He was obliged to listen to a Latin verse, which the poet had composed upon Vatel. La Fontaine had, for an hour, been scanning this verse in all corners, seeking some one to pour it out upon advantageously. He thought he had caught Pellisson, but the latter escaped him; he turned towards Sorel, who had, himself, just composed a *quatrain* in honour of the supper and the *Amphytrion*. La Fontaine in vain endeavoured to gain attention to his verses; Sorel wanted to obtain a hearing for his *quatrain*. He was obliged to retrograde before M. le Comte de Chanost, whose arm Fouquet had just taken. L'Abbé Fouquet perceived that the poet, as absent as usual, was about to follow the two talkers; and he interposed. La Fontaine seized upon him, and recited his verses. The abbé, who was quite innocent of Latin, nodded his head, in cadence, at every roll which La Fontaine impressed upon his body, according to the undulations of the dactyls and spondees. While this was going on, behind the confiture basins, Fouquet related the event of the day to his son-in-law, M. Chanost. "We must send the idle and useless to look at the fireworks," said Pellisson to Gourville, "whilst we converse here."

"So be it," said Gourville, addressing four words to Vatel. The latter then led towards the gardens the major part of the beaux, the ladies and the chatterers, whilst the men walked in the gallery, lighted by three hundred waxlights, in the sight of all; the admirers of fireworks all ran away towards the garden. Gourville approached Fouquet, and said: "Monsieur, we are all here."

"All!" said Fouquet.

"Yes,—count." The surintendant counted; there were eight persons. Pellisson and Gourville walked arm in arm, as if conversing upon vague and light subjects. Sorel and two officers imitated them, in an opposite direction. The Abbé Fouquet walked alone. Fouquet, with M. de Chanost, walked as if entirely absorbed by the conversation of his son-in-law. "Messieurs," said he, "let no one of you raise his head as he walks, or appear to pay attention to me; continue walking, we are alone, listen to me."

A perfect silence ensued, disturbed only by the distant cries of the joyous guests, from the groves whence they beheld the fireworks. It was a whimsical spectacle this, of these men walking in groups, as if each one was occupied about something, whilst lending attention really to only one amongst them, who, himself, seemed to be speaking only to his companion. "Messieurs," said Fouquet, "you have, without doubt, remarked the absence of two of my friends this evening, who were with us on Wednesday. For God's sake, abbé, do not stop,—it is not necessary to enable you to listen; walk on, carrying your head in a natural way, and, as you have an excellent sight, place yourself at the window, and if any one returns towards the gallery, give us notice by coughing." The abbé obeyed.

"I have not observed the absent," said Pellisson, who, at this moment, was turning his back to Fouquet, and walking the other way.

"I do not see M. Lyodot," said Sorel, "who pays me my pension."

"And I," said the abbé, at the window, "do not see M. d'Eymeris, who owes me eleven hundred livres from our last game at Brehan."

"Sorel," continued Fouquet, walking bent, and gloomily, "you will never receive your pension any more from M. Lyodot ; and you, abbé, will never be paid your eleven hundred livres by M. d'Eymeris ; for both are about to die."

"To die !" exclaimed the whole assembly, stopped, in spite of themselves, in the scene they were playing, by that terrible word.

"Recover yourselves, messieurs," said Fouquet, "for, perhaps, we are watched—I said : to die !"

"To die !" repeated Pellisson ; "what, the men I saw not six days ago, full of health, gaiety, and a future ! What then is man, good God ! that disease should thus bring him down all at once !"

"It is not a disease," said Fouquet.

"Then there is a remedy," said Sorel.

"No remedy. Messieurs de Lyodot and d'Eymeris are on the eve of their last day."

"Of what are these gentlemen dying then ?" asked an officer.

"Ask of him who kills them," replied Fouquet.

"Who kills them ? Are they being killed, then ?" cried the terrified chorus.

"They do better still ; they are hanging them," murmured Fouquet, in a sinister voice, which sounded like a funeral knell in that rich gallery, splendid with pictures, flowers, velvet, and gold. Involuntarily every one stopped ; the abbé quitted his window ; the first fuses of the fireworks began to mount above the trees. A prolonged cry from the gardens attracted the surintendant to enjoy the spectacle. He drew near to a window, and his friends placed themselves behind him, attentive to his least wish. "Messieurs," said he, "M. Colbert has caused to be arrested, tried, and will execute to death my two friends ; what does it become me to do ?"

"*Mordieu !*" exclaimed the abbé, the first, "run M. Colbert through the body."

"Monseigneur," said Pellisson, "you must speak to his majesty."

"The king, my dear Pellisson, has signed the order for the execution."

"Well !" said the Comte de Chanost, "the execution must not take place, then ; that is all."

"Impossible," said Gourville, "unless we could corrupt the jailers."

"Or the governor," said Fouquet.

"This night the prisoners might be allowed to escape."

"Which of you will take charge of the transaction ?"

"I," said the abbé, "will carry the money."

"And I," said Pellisson, "will be bearer of the words."

"Words and money," said Fouquet ; "five hundred thousand livres to the governor of the *conciergerie*, that is sufficient ; nevertheless, it shall be a million, if necessary."

"A million !" cried the abbé ; "why, for less than half, I would cause the half of Paris to be sacked."

"There must be no disorder," said Pellisson. "The governor being won, the two prisoners escape ; once clear of the fangs of the law, they will call together the enemies of Colbert, and prove to the king that his young justice, like all other exaggerations, is not infallible."

"Go to Paris, then, Pellisson," said Fouquet, "and bring hither the two victims ; to-morrow we shall see."

Gourville gave Pellisson the five hundred thousand livres. "Take care the wind does not carry you away," said the abbé ; "what a responsibility. *Peste !* Let me help you a little."

"Silence !" said Fouquet, "somebody is coming. Ah ! the fireworks are producing a magical effect." At this moment a shower of sparks fell rustling among the branches of the neighbouring trees. Pellisson and Gourville went out together by the door of the gallery ; Fouquet descended to the garden with the five last plotters.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

### THE EPICUREANS.

AS Fouquet was giving, or appearing to give, all his attention to the brilliant illuminations, the languishing music of the violins and hautboys, the sparkling sheaves of the artificial fires, which, inflaming the heavens with glowing reflections, marked behind the trees the dark profile of the donjon of Vincennes ; as we say, the surintendant was smiling on the ladies and the poets, the *fête* was not less gay than ordinary ; and Vatel, whose restless, even jealous look, earnestly consulted the look of Fouquet, did not appear dissatisfied with the welcome given to the ordering of the evening entertainment. The fireworks over, the company dispersed about the gardens and beneath the marble porticos with that delightful liberty which reveals in the master of the house so much forgetfulness of greatness, so much courteous hospitality, so much magnificent carelessness. The poets wandered about, arm in arm, through the groves ; some reclined upon beds of moss, to the great damage of velvet clothes and curled heads, into which little dried leaves and blades of grass insinuated themselves. The ladies, in small numbers, listened to the songs of the singers and the verses of the poets ; others listened to the prose, spoken with much art, by men who were neither actors nor poets, but to whom youth and solitude gave an unaccustomed eloquence, which appeared to them preferable to all. "Why," said La Fontaine, "does not our master Epicurus descend into the garden ? Epicurus never abandoned his pupils ; the master is wrong."

"Monsieur," said Conrard, "you are very wrong in persisting to decorate yourself with the name of an Epicurean ; indeed, nothing here reminds me of the doctrine of the philosopher of Gargetta."

"Bah !" said La Fontaine, "is it not written that Epicurus purchased a large garden, and lived in it tranquilly with his friends ?"

"That is true."

"Well, has not M. Fouquet purchased a large garden at Saint-Mandé, and do we not live here very tranquilly with him and his friends ?"

"Yes, without doubt. Unfortunately, it is neither the garden nor the friends which can make the resemblance. Now, what likeness is there between the doctrine of Epicurus and that of M. Fouquet ?"

"This—pleasure gives happiness."

"Next ?"

"Well, I do not think we ought to consider ourselves unfortunate, for my part, at least. A good repast—*vin de Foigny*, which they have the delicacy to go and fetch for me from my favourite *cabaret* ; not one impertinence heard during a supper of an hour long, in spite of the presence of ten millionaires and twenty poets."

"I stop you there. You mentioned *vin de Foigny* and a good repast ; do you persist in that ?"

"I persist—*anteco*, as they say at Port Royal."

"Then please to recollect that the great Epicurus lived, and made his pupils live, upon bread, vegetables, and clear water."

"That is not certain," said La Fontaine; "and you appear to me to be confounding Epicurus with Pythagoras, my dear Conrard."

"Remember, likewise, that the ancient philosopher was rather a bad friend of the gods and the magistrates."

"Oh, that is what I cannot suffer," replied La Fontaine. "Epicurus was like M. Fouquet."

"Do not compare him to monsieur le surintendant," said Conrard, in an agitated voice, "or you would accredit the reports which are circulated concerning him and us."

"What reports?"

"That we are bad Frenchmen, lukewarm with regard to the monarch, deaf to the law."

"I return, then, to my text," said La Fontaine. "Listen, Conrard, this is the morality of Epicurus, whom, besides, I consider, if I must tell you so, as a myth. All which touches the least upon antiquity is a myth. Jupiter, if we give a little attention to it, is life. Alcides is strength. The words are there to bear me out: Zeus, that is *zen*, to live; Alcides, that is *alcè*, vigour. Well, Epicurus, that is mild watchfulness, that is protection. Now, who watches better over the State, or who protects individuals, better than M. Fouquet does?"

"You talk etymology, and not morality; I say that we modern Epicureans are troublesome citizens."

"Oh!" cried La Fontaine, "if we become troublesome citizens, it will not be in following the maxims of our master. Listen to one of his principal aphorisms."

"I listen."

"Wish for good leaders."

"Well?"

"Well! what does M. Fouquet say to us every day? 'When shall we be governed?' Does he say so? Come, Conrard, be frank."

"He says so, that is true."

"Well, that is a doctrine of Epicurus."

"Yes: but that is a little seditious, observe."

"How—seditious to wish to be governed by good heads or leaders?"

"Certainly, when those who govern are bad."

"Patience! I have a reply for all."

"Even for that I have just said to you?"

"Listen! Would you submit to those who govern ill? Oh, it is written, *Cacôs politeuouσι*. You grant me the text?"

"*Pardieu!* I think so. Do you know you speak Greek as well as Æsop did, my dear La Fontaine."

"Is there any wickedness in that, my dear Conrard?"

"God forbid I should say so."

"Then let us return to M. Fouquet. What did he repeat to us all the day? Was it not this: 'What a *cuistre* is that Mazarin! what an ass! what a leech! We must, however, submit to the fellow!' Now, Conrard, did he say so, or did he not?"

"I confess that he said it, and even perhaps too often."

"Like Epicurus, my friend, still like Epicurus; I repeat, we are Epicureans, and that is very amusing."

"Yes; but I am afraid there will rise up, by the side of us, a sect like that of Epictetus. You know him well—the philosopher of Hieropolis—

he who called bread luxury, vegetables prodigality, and clear water drunkenness—he who, being beaten by his master, said to him, grumbling a little it is true, but without being angry, ‘I will lay a wager you have broken my leg!’ and who won his wager.”

“He was a gosling, that Epictetus!”

“Granted; but he might easily become the fashion by only changing his name into that of Colbert.”

“Bah!” replied La Fontaine, “that is impossible; never will you find Colbert in Epictetus.”

“You are right; I shall find—*Coluber* there, at the most.”

“Ah, you are beaten, Conrard; you are reduced to a play upon words. M. Arnaud pretends that I have no logic; I have more than M. Nicolle.”

“Yes,” replied Conrard, “you have logic, but you are a Jansenist.”

This peroration was hailed by an immense shout of laughter; by degrees the promenaders had been attracted by the exclamations of the two disputants around the arbour under which they argued. All the discussion had been religiously listened to, and Fouquet himself, scarcely able to suppress his laughter, had given an example of moderation. But the *dénouement* of the scene threw off all restraint; he laughed aloud. Everybody laughed as he did, and the two philosophers were saluted by unanimous felicitations. La Fontaine, however, was declared conqueror, on account of his profound erudition and his irrefragable logic. Conrard obtained the compensation due to an unsuccessful combatant: he was praised for his loyalty and the purity of his conscience.

At the moment when this joy was manifesting itself by the most lively demonstrations—at the moment when the ladies were reproaching the two adversaries with not having admitted women into the system of Epicurean happiness, Gourville was seen hastening from the other end of the garden, approaching Fouquet, who surveyed him anxiously, and detaching him, by his presence alone, from the group. The surintendant preserved upon his face the smile and the character of carelessness; but scarcely was he out of sight than he threw off the mask. “Well,” said he eagerly, “where is Pellisson? What is he doing?”

“Pellisson is returned from Paris.”

“Has he brought back the prisoners?”

“He has not even seen the *concierge* of the prison.”

“What! did he not tell him he came from me?”

“He told him so, but the *concierge* sent him this reply: ‘If any one came to me from M. Fouquet, he would have a letter from M. Fouquet.’”

“Oh!” cried the latter, “if a letter is all he wants——”

“Never, monsieur!” said Pellisson, showing himself at the corner of the little wood, “never. Go yourself, and speak in your own name.”

“You are right. I will go in, as if to work; let the horses remain harnessed, Pellisson. Entertain my friends, Gourville.”

“One last word of advice, monseigneur,” replied the latter.

“Speak, Gourville.”

“Do not go to the *concierge* but at the last minute; it is brave, but it is not wise. Excuse me, Monsieur Pellisson, if I am not of the same opinion as you; but believe me, monseigneur, send again a message to this *concierge*,—he is a worthy man, but do not carry it yourself.”

“I will think of it,” said Fouquet; “besides, we have all the night before us.”

“Do not reckon too much upon time; were the time we have double

what it is, it would not be too much," replied Pellisson; "it is never a fault to arrive too soon."

"Adieu!" said the surintendant; "come with me, Pellisson. Gourville, commend my guests to your care." And he set off. The Epicureans did not perceive that the head of the school had left them: the violins continued playing all night.

## CHAPTER LIX.

### A QUARTER OF AN HOUR'S DELAY.

FOUQUET, on leaving his house for the second time that day, felt himself less heavy and less disturbed than might have been expected. He turned towards Pellisson, who was meditating in the corner of the carriage some good arguments against the violent proceedings of Colbert.

"My dear Pellisson," said Fouquet, then, "it is a great pity you are not a woman."

"I think, on the contrary, it is very fortunate," replied Pellisson; "for, monseigneur, I am excessively ugly."

"Pellisson! Pellisson!" said the surintendant, laughing. "You repeat too often, you are 'ugly,' not to leave people to believe that it gives you much pain."

"In fact it does, monseigneur, much; there is no man more unfortunate than I; I was handsome, the small-pox rendered me hideous; I am deprived of a great means of seduction; now, I am your principal clerk, or something of that sort; I take great interest in your affairs, and if, at this moment, I were a pretty woman, I could render you an important service."

"What?"

"I would go and find the *conciergerie* of the Palais; I would seduce him, for he is a gallant man, extravagantly partial to women; then I would get away our two prisoners."

"I hope to be able to do so myself, although I am not a pretty woman," replied Fouquet.

"Granted, monseigneur; but you are compromising yourself very much."

"Oh!" cried Fouquet, suddenly, with one of those secret transports which the generous blood of youth, or the remembrance of some sweet emotion, infuses into the heart. "Oh! I know a woman who will enact the personage we stand in need of, with the lieutenant-governor of the *conciergerie*."

"And, on my part, I know fifty, monseigneur; fifty trumpets, which will inform the universe of your generosity, of your devotion to your friends, and, consequently, will ruin you sooner or later in ruining themselves."

"I do not speak of such women, Pellisson; I speak of a noble and beautiful creature who joins to the intelligence and wit of her sex, the valour and coolness of ours; I speak of a woman, handsome enough to make the walls of a prison bow down to salute her, of a woman discreet enough to let no one suspect by whom she has been sent."

"A treasure!" said Pellisson; "you would make a famous present to monsieur the governor of the *conciergerie*! *Peste!* monseigneur, he might have his head cut off, that might happen; but he would, before dying, have had such happiness as no man had enjoyed before him."

"And I add," said Fouquet, "that the *concierge* of the Palais would not have his head cut off, for he would receive of me my horses, to effect his escape, and five hundred thousand livres wherewith to live comfortably in England : I add, that this woman, my friend, would give him nothing but the horses and the money. Let us go and seek this woman, Pellisson."

The surintendant reached forth his hand towards the gold and silken cord placed in the interior of his carriage, but Pellisson stopped him. "Monseigneur," said he, "you are going to lose as much time in seeking this woman as Columbus took to discover the new world. Now, we have but two hours in which we can possibly succeed ; the *concierge* once got to bed, how shall we get at him without making a disturbance ? When daylight dawns, how can we conceal our proceedings ? Go, go yourself, monseigneur, and do not seek either woman or an angel to-night."

"But, my dear Pellisson, here we are before her door."

"What ! before the angel's door ?"

"Why, yes."

"This is the hotel of Madame de Bellière !"

"Hush !"

"Ah ! Good Lord !" exclaimed Pellisson.

"What have you to say against her ?"

"Nothing, alas ! and it is that which creates my despair. Nothing absolutely nothing. Why can I not, on the contrary, say ill enough of her to prevent your going to her ?"

But Fouquet had already given orders to stop, and the carriage was motionless. "Prevent me !" cried Fouquet ; "why, no power on earth should prevent my going to pay my compliments to Madame de Plessis-Bellièvre ; besides, who knows that we shall not stand in need of her ?"

"No, monseigneur, no !"

"But I do not wish you to wait for me, Pellisson," replied Fouquet, with sincere courtesy.

"The greater reason why I should, monseigneur ; knowing that you are keeping me waiting, you will, perhaps, stay a shorter time. Take care ! You see there is a carriage in the courtyard ; she has some one with her." Fouquet leant towards the steps of the carriage. "One word more," cried Pellisson ; "do not go to this lady till you have been to the *concierge*, for Heaven's sake !"

"Eh ! five minutes, Pellisson," replied Fouquet, alighting at the steps of the hotel, leaving Pellisson in the carriage, in a very ill humour. Fouquet ran up stairs, told his name to the footman, which excited an eagerness and a respect that showed the habit the mistress of the house had of honouring that name in her family. "Monsieur le surintendant," cried the marquise, advancing, very pale, to meet him ; "what an honour ! what an unexpected pleasure !" said she. Then in a low voice, "Take care !" added the marquise, "Marguerite Vanel is here !"

"Madame," replied Fouquet, rather agitated, "I came upon business. One single word, in haste, if you please !" And he entered the *salon*. Madame Vanel had risen, more pale, more livid, than Envy herself. Fouquet in vain addressed her, with the most agreeable, most pacific salutation ; she only replied by a terrible glance darted at the marquise and Fouquet. This keen glance of a jealous woman is a stiletto which pierces every cuirass ; Marguerite Vanel plunged it straight into the hearts of the two confidants. She made a curtsy to *her friend*, a more profound one to Fouquet, and took leave, under pretence of having a great number of visits to make, without the marquise trying to prevent her, or Fouquet, a

prey to anxiety, thinking anything about her. She was scarcely out of the room, and Fouquet left alone with the marquise, before he threw himself on his knees, without saying a word. "I expected you," said the marquise, with a tender sigh.

"Oh! no," cried he, "or you would have sent away that woman."

"She has been here little more than half an hour, and I had no suspicion she would come this evening."

"You do love me a little, then, marquise?"

"That is not the question, now; it is of your dangers; how are your affairs going on?"

"I am going this evening to get my friends out of the prisons of the Palais."

"How will you do that?"

"By buying and seducing the governor."

"He is a friend of mine; can I assist you, without injuring you?"

"Oh! marquise, it would be a signal service; but how can you be employed without your being compromised? Now, never shall my life, my power, or even my liberty, be purchased at the expense of a single tear from your eyes, or of a single pain upon your brow!"

"Monseigneur, speak no more such words, they bewilder me; I have been culpable in trying to serve you, without calculating the extent of what I was doing. I love you, in reality, as a tender friend, and as a friend, I am grateful for your delicate attentions—but, alas!—alas! you will never be a mistress in me."

"Marquise!" cried Fouquet in a tone of despair, "why not?"

"Because you are too much beloved," said the young woman, in a low voice; "because you are too much beloved by too many people—because the splendour of glory and fortune wound my eyes, whilst the darkness of sorrow attracts them; because, in short, I, who have repulsed you in your proud magnificence; I, who scarcely looked at you in your splendour, I came, like a mad woman, to throw myself, as it were, into your arms, when I saw a misfortune hovering over your head. You understand me, now, monseigneur? Become happy again, that I may again, become chaste in heart and in thought: your misfortunes would ruin me!"

"Oh! madame," said Fouquet, with an emotion he had never before felt; "were I to fall to the last degree of human misery, and should hear from your mouth that word which you now refuse me, that day, madame, you will be mistaken in your noble egotism; that day you will fancy you are consoling the most unfortunate of men, and you will have said: *I love you* to the most illustrious, the most delighted, the most triumphant of the happy beings of this world."

He was still at her feet, kissing her hand when Pellisson entered precipitately, crying, in very ill humour, "Monseigneur! madame! for Heaven's sake! excuse me. Monseigneur, you have been here half an hour. Oh! do not both look at me so reproachfully. Madame, pray who is that lady who left your house soon after monseigneur came in?"

"Madame Vanel," said Fouquet.

"There," cried Pellisson, "I was sure of that."

"Well! what then?"

"Why, she got into her carriage looking deadly pale."

"What consequence is that to me?"

"Yes, but what she said to her coachman is of consequence to you."

"What, good God!" cried the marquise, "was that?"

"To M. Colbert's!" said Pellisson in a hoarse voice.

"Good Heavens! begone, begone, monseigneur!" replied the marquise, pushing Fouquet out of the *salon*, whilst Pellisson dragged him by the hand.

"Am I, then, indeed," said the surintendant, "become a child, to be frightened by a shadow?"

"You are a giant," said the marquise, "whom a viper is endeavouring to bite at the heel."

Pellisson continued to drag Fouquet quite to the carriage. "To avoid the palais at full speed!" cried Pellisson to the coachman. The horses set off like lightning; no obstacle relaxed their pace for an instant. Only at the Arcade Saint-Jean, as they were coming out upon the Place de Grève, the long file of horsemen, barring the narrow passage, stopped the carriage of the surintendant. There was no means of forcing this barrier; it was necessary to wait till the mounted archers of the watch, for it was they who stopped the way, had passed with the heavy carriage they were escorting, and which ascended rapidly towards the Place Baudoyer. Fouquet and Pellisson took no further account of this circumstance beyond deploring the minute's delay they had to submit to. They entered the habitation of the *conciergerie du palais* five minutes after. That officer was still walking about in the front court. At the name of Fouquet, whispered in his ear by Pellisson, the governor eagerly approached the carriage, and, hat in his hand, was profuse in his reverences. "What an honour for me, monseigneur," said he.

"One word, monsieur le gouverneur, will you take the trouble to get into my carriage?" The officer placed himself opposite Fouquet in the coach.

"Monsieur," said Fouquet, "I have a service to ask of you."

"Speak, monseigneur."

"A service that will be compromising for you, monsieur, but which will assure to you for ever my protection and my friendship."

"Were it to cast myself into the fire for you, monseigneur, I would do it."

"That is well," said Fouquet; "what I require is much more simple."

"That being so, monseigneur, what is it?"

"To conduct me to the chamber of Messrs. Lyodot and d'Eymeris."

"Will monseigneur have the kindness to say for what purpose?"

"I will tell you in their presence, monsieur; at the same time that I will give you ample means of palliating this escape."

"Escape! Why, then, monseigneur, does not know?"

"What?"

"That Messrs. Lyodot and D'Eymeris are no longer here."

"Since when?" cried Fouquet, in great agitation.

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Whither are they gone, then?"

"To Vincennes—to the donjon."

"Who took them from here?"

"An order from the king."

"Oh! woe! woe!" exclaimed Fouquet, striking his forehead. "Woe!" and without saying a single word more to the governor, he threw himself back in his carriage, despair in his heart and death on his countenance.

"Well!" said Pellisson, with great anxiety.

"Our friends are lost. Colbert is conveying them to the donjon. It was they who crossed our passage under the arcade St. Jean."

Pellisson, struck as with a thunderbolt, made no reply. With a single approach he would have killed his master. "Where is monseigneur going?" said the footman.

"Home—to Paris. You, Pellisson, return to Saint-Mandé, and bring the Abbé Fouquet to me within an hour. Begone!"

## CHAPTER LX.

### PLAN OF BATTLE.

THE night was already far advanced when the Abbé Fouquet joined his brother. Gourville had accompanied him. These three men, pale with future events, resembled less three powers of the day than three conspirators, united by one same thought of violence. Fouquet walked for a long time, with his eyes fixed upon the floor, striking his hands one against the other. At length, taking courage, in the midst of a deep, long sigh: "Abbé," said he, "you were speaking to me, only to-day, of certain people to maintain?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the abbé.

"Tell me precisely who are these people?" The abbé hesitated.

"Come! no fear, I am not threatening; no romancing, for I am not joking."

"Since you demand the truth, monseigneur, here it is:—I have a hundred and twenty friends or companions of pleasure, who are sworn to me as the thief is to the gallows."

"And you think you can depend upon them?"

"Entirely."

"And you will not compromise yourself?"

"I will not even make my appearance."

"And are they men of resolution?"

"They would burn Paris, if I promised them they should not be burnt in turn."

"The thing I ask of you, abbé," said Fouquet, wiping the sweat which fell from his brow, "is to throw your hundred and twenty men upon the people I will point out to you, at a certain moment given—is it possible?"

"It will not be the first time such a thing has happened to them, monseigneur."

"That is well; but would these bandits attack an armed force?"

"They are used to that."

"Then get your hundred and twenty men together, abbé."

"Directly. But where?"

"On the road to Vincennes, to-morrow, at two o'clock precisely."

"To carry off Lyodot and D'Eymeris? There will be blows to be got!"

"A number, no doubt; are you afraid?"

"Not for myself, but for you."

"Your men will know then what they have to do?"

"They are too intelligent not to guess it. Now, a minister who gets up a riot against his king—exposes himself——"

"Of what importance is that to you, I pray? Besides, if I fall, you fall with me."

"It would then be more prudent, monsieur, not to stir in the affair, and leave the king to take this little satisfaction."

"Think well of this, abbé. Lyodot and D'Eymeris at Vincennes are a

prelude of ruin for my house. I repeat it—I arrested, you will be imprisoned—I imprisoned, you will be exiled.”

“Monsieur, I am at your orders ; have you any to give me ?”

“What I told you—I wish that, to-morrow, the two financiers of whom they mean to make victims, whilst there remain so many criminals unpunished, should be snatched from the fury of my enemies. Take your measures accordingly. Is it possible ?”

“It is possible.”

“Describe your plan.”

“It is of rich simplicity. The ordinary guard at executions consists of twelve archers.”

“There will be a hundred to-morrow.”

“I reckon so. I even say more—there will be two hundred.”

“Then your hundred and twenty men will not be enough.”

“Pardon me. In every crowd composed of a hundred thousand spectators, there are ten thousand bandits or cutpurses—only they dare not take the initiative.”

“Well ?”

“There will then be, to-morrow, on the Place de Grève, which I choose as my battle-field, ten thousand auxiliaries to my hundred and twenty men. The attack commenced by the latter, the others will finish it.”

“That all appears feasible. But what will be done with regard to the prisoners upon the Place de Grève ?”

“This ; they must be thrust into some house—that will make a siege necessary to get them out again. And stop ! here is another idea, more sublime still : certain houses have two issues—one upon the Place, and the other into the Rue de la Mortellerie, or la Vannerie, or la Texeranderie. The prisoners, entering by one door, will go out at another.”

“Yes ; but fix upon something positive.”

“I am seeking to do so.”

“And I,” cried Fouquet, “I have found it. Listen to what has occurred to me at this moment.”

“I am listening.”

Fouquet made a sign to Gourville, who appeared to understand. “One of my friends lends me sometimes the keys of a house which he rents, Rue Baudoyer, the spacious gardens of which extend behind a certain house of the Place de Grève.”

“That is the place for us,” said the abbé. “What house ?”

“A *cabaret*, pretty well frequented, whose sign represents the image of Notre Dame.”

“I know it,” said the abbé.

“This *cabaret* has windows opening upon the Place, a place of exit into the court, which must abut upon the gardens of my friend by a door of communication.”

“Good !” said the abbé.

“Enter by the *cabaret*, take the prisoners in ; defend the door while you enable them to fly by the garden and the Place Baudoyer.”

“That is all plain. Monsieur, you would make an excellent general, like monsieur le prince.”

“Have you understood me ?”—“Perfectly well.”

“How much will it amount to, to make your bandits all drunk with wine, and to satisfy them with gold ?”

“Oh, monsieur, what an expression ! Oh, monsieur, if they heard you ! Some of them are very susceptible.”

"I mean to say they must be brought no longer to know the heavens from the earth; for I shall to-morrow contend with the king; and when I fight I mean to conquer—please to understand."

"It shall be done, monsieur. Give me your other ideas."

"That is your business."

"Then give me your purse."

"Gourville, count a hundred thousand livres for the abbé."

"Good! and spare nothing, did you not say?"—"Nothing."

"That is well."

"Monseigneur," objected Gourville, "if this should be known, we should lose our heads."

"Eh! Gourville," replied Fouquet, purple with anger, "you excite my pity. Speak for yourself, if you please. My head does not shake in that manner upon my shoulders. Now, abbé, is everything arranged?"

"Everything."

"At two o'clock to-morrow."

"At twelve, because it will be necessary to prepare our auxiliaries in a secret manner."

"That is true; do not spare the wine of the *cabaretier*."

"I will spare neither his wine nor his house," replied the abbé, with a sneering laugh. "I have my plan, I tell you; leave me to set it in operation, and you shall see."

"Where shall you be yourself?"

"Everywhere; nowhere."

"And how shall I receive information?"

"By a courier, whose horse shall be kept in the very garden of your friend. *A propos*, the name of your friend."

Fouquet looked again at Gourville. The latter came to the succour of his master, saying, "Accompany monsieur l'abbé for several reasons; only the house is easily to be known, the 'Image-de-Nôtre-Dame' in the front, a garden, the only one in the quarter, behind."

"Good! good! I will go and give notice to my soldiers."

"Accompany him, Gourville," said Fouquet, "and count him down the money. One moment, abbé—one moment, Gourville—what name will be given to this carrying off?"

"A very natural one, monsieur—the Riot."

"The riot on account of what? For, if ever the people of Paris are disposed to pay their court to the king, it is when he hangs financiers."

"I will manage that," said the abbé.

"Yes; but you may manage it badly, and people will guess."

"Not at all,—not at all. I have another idea."

"What is that?"

"My men shall cry out 'Colbert, *vive* Colbert!' and shall throw themselves upon the prisoners as if they would tear them in pieces, and shall force them from the gibbets, as too mild a punishment."

"Ah! that is an idea," said Gourville. "*Peste!* monsieur l'abbé, what an imagination you have!"

"Monsieur, we are worthy of our family," replied the abbé, proudly.

"A brave fellow," murmured Fouquet. Then he added, "That is in-  
carry it out, but shed no blood."

and the abbé set off together, with their heads full of the  
The surintendant laid himself down upon some cushions,  
respect to the sinister projects of the morrow, half

## CHAPTER LXI.

## THE CABARET OF THE IMAGE-DE-NÔTRE-DAME.

AT two o'clock the next day, fifty thousand spectators had taken the position upon the Place, around the two gibbets which had been elevated between the Quai de la Grève and the Quai Pelletier ; one close to the other, with their backs to the parapet of the river. In the morning all the sworn criers of the good city of Paris had traversed the quarters of the city, particularly the *halles* and the *faubourgs*, announcing with their hoarse and indefatigable voices, the great justice done by the king upon two peculators, two thieves, devourers of the people. And these people, whose interests were so warmly looked after, in order not to fail in respect for their king, quitted shops, stalls, and *ateliers*, to go and evince a little gratitude to Louis XIV., absolutely like invited guests, who feared to commit an impoliteness in not repairing to the house of him who invited them. According to the tenor of the sentence, which the criers read loudly and badly, two farmers of the revenues, monopolists of money, dilapidators of the royal provisions, extortioners and forgers, were about to undergo capital punishment on the Place de Grève, with their names affixed over their heads, according to their sentence. As to those names, the sentence made no mention of them. The curiosity of the Parisians was at its height, and as we have said, an immense crowd waited with feverish impatience the hour fixed for the execution. The news had already spread that the prisoners transferred to the Château de Vincennes, would be conducted from the prison to the Place de Grève. Consequently, the faubourg and the Rue Saint-Antoine were crowded ; for the population of Paris in those days of great executions was divided into two categories ; those who came to see the condemned pass—these were of timid and mild hearts, but curious in philosophy—and those who wished to see the condemned die—these were of hearts desirous of emotions. On this day M. d'Artagnan received his last instructions from the king, and made his adieus to his friends, the number of whom was, at the moment, reduced to Planchet, traced the plan of his day, as every busy man whose moments are counted ought to do, because he appreciates their importance.

"My departure is to be," said he, "at break of day, three o'clock in the morning ; I have then fifteen hours before me. Take from them the six hours of sleep which are indispensable for me—six ; one hour for repasts—seven ; one hour for a farewell visit to Athos—eight ; two hours for chance circumstances—total, ten. There are then five hours left. One hour to get my money,—that is, to have payment refused by M. Fouquet ; another hour to go and receive my money of M. Colbert, together with his questions and grimaces ; one hour to look over my clothes and my arms, and get my boots cleaned. I have still two hours left. *Mordioux !* how rich I am !" And so saying, D'Artagnan felt a strange joy, a joy of youth, a perfume of those great and happy years of former times, mount into his brain and intoxicate him. "During these two hours I will," said the musketeer, "and take my quarter's rent of the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame. That will be pleasant ! Three hundred and seventy-five livres ! *Mordioux !* but that is astonishing ! If the poor man who has but one livre in his pocket, found a livre and twelve deniers, that would be justice, that would be excellent ; but never does such a God-send fall to the lot of the poor man. The rich man, on the contrary, makes himself revenues with his money, which he does not touch. Here are three hundred and

seventy-five livres which fall to me from heaven. I will go, then, to the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame, and drink a glass of Spanish wine with my tenant, which he cannot fail to offer me. But order must be observed, Monsieur D'Artagnan, order must be observed ! Let us organise our time, then, and distribute the employment of it : Art. 1st, Athos ; Art. 2nd, the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame ; Art. 3rd, M. Fouquet ; Art. 4th, M. Colbert ; Art. 5th, supper ; Art. 6th, clothes, boots, horse, portmanteau ; Art. 7th and last, sleep."

In consequence of this arrangement, D'Artagnan then went straight to the Comte de la Fère, to whom, modestly and ingenuously, he related a part of his fortunate adventures. Athos had not been without uneasiness on the subject of D'Artagnan's visit to the king ; but few words sufficed as an explanation of that. Athos divined that Louis had charged D'Artagnan with some important mission, and did not even make an effort to draw the secret from him. He only recommended him to take care of himself, and offered discreetly to accompany him, if that were desirable.

"But, my dear friend," said D'Artagnan, "I am going nowhere."

"What ! you come and bid me adieu, and are going nowhere ?"

"Oh ! yes, yes," replied D'Artagnan, colouring a little, "I am going to make an acquisition."

"That is quite another thing. Then I change my formula. Instead of 'Do not get yourself killed,' I will say,—'Do not get yourself robbed.'"

"My friend, I will inform you if I cast my eye upon any property that pleases me, and shall expect you will favour me with your opinion."

"Yes, yes," said Athos, too delicate to permit himself even the consolation of a smile. Raoul imitated the paternal reserve. But D'Artagnan thought it would appear too mysterious to leave his friends under a pretence, without even telling them the route he was about to take.

"I have chosen Le Mans," said he to Athos. "Is it a good country ?"

"Excellent, my friend," replied the comte, without making him observe that Le Mans was in the same direction as La Touraine, and that by waiting two days, at most, he might travel with a friend. But D'Artagnan, more embarrassed than the comte, dug, at every explanation, deeper into the mud, into which he sank by degrees. "I shall set out to-morrow at daybreak," said he at last. "Till that time, will you come with me, Raoul ?"

"Yes, monsieur le chevalier," said the young man, "if monsieur le comte does not want me."

"No, Raoul ; I am to have an audience to-day of Monsieur, the king's brother ; that is all I have to do."

Raoul asked Grimaud for his sword, which the old man brought him immediately. "Now, then," added D'Artagnan, opening his arms to Athos, "Adieu, my dear friend !" Athos held him in a long embrace, and the musketeer, who knew his discretion so well, murmured in his ear,—"An affair of state," to which Athos only replied by a pressure of the hand, still more significant. They then separated. Raoul took the arm of his old friend, who led him along the Rue Saint-Honoré. "I am conducting you to the abode of the god Plutus," said D'Artagnan to the young man ; "prepare yourself. The whole day you will witness the piling-up of crowns. Good God ! how am I changed !"

"Oh ! oh ! what numbers of people there are in the street !" said Raoul.

"Is there a procession to-day ?" asked D'Artagnan of a passer-by.

"Monsieur, it is a hanging," replied the man.

"What ! a hanging at the Grève ?" said D'Artagnan.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Devil take the rogue who gets himself hung the day I want to go and take my rent!" cried D'Artagnan. "Raoul, did you ever see anybody hung?"

"Never, monsieur—thank God!"

"Oh! how young that sounds! If you were on guard in the trenches as I was, and a spy——But, look you, pardon me, Raoul, I am doting; you are quite right, it is a hideous sight to see a person hung! At what hour do they hang, monsieur, if you please?"

"Monsieur," replied the stranger respectfully, delighted at joining conversation with two men of the sword; "it will take place about three o'clock."

"Oh! oh! it is now only half-past one; let us step out, we shall be there in time to touch my three hundred and seventy-five livres, and get away before the arrival of the malefactor."

"Malefactors, monsieur," continued the *bourgeois*; "there are two of them."

"Monsieur, I return you many thanks," said D'Artagnan, who, as he grew older, had become polite to a degree. Drawing Raoul along, he directed his course rapidly in the direction of La Grève. Without the great experience musketeers have of a crowd, to which were joined an irresistible strength of wrist and an uncommon suppleness of shoulders, or two travellers would not have arrived at their place of destination. They followed the line of the *Quai*, which they had gained on quitting the Rue Saint-Honoré, where they left Athos. D'Artagnan went first: his elbow on his wrist, his shoulder, formed three wedges which he knew how to insinuate with skill into the groups, to make them split and separate like pieces of wood. He often made use of the hilt of his sword as an additional help; introducing it between ribs that were too rebellious, making it take the part of a lever or crowbar, to separate husband from wife, uncle from nephew, and brother from brother. And all this was done so naturally, and with such gracious smiles, that people must have had ribs of bronze not to cry, "Thank you!" when the wrist made its play; or hearts of diamond not to be enchanted when the bland smile enlivened the lips of the musketeer. Raoul, following his friend, cajoled the women, who admired his beauty, pushed back the men, who felt the rigidity of his muscles, and both opened thanks to these manœuvres, the rather compact and rather muddy tide of the populace. They arrived in sight of the two gibbets, from which Raoul turned away his eyes in disgust. As for D'Artagnan, he did not even see them: his house, with its gabled roof, its windows crowded with the curious, attracted and even absorbed all the attention he was capable of. He distinguished, in the Place and around the houses, a good number of musketeers on leave, who, some with women, others with friends, awaited the moment of the ceremony. What rejoiced him above all was to see that his tenant, the *cabaretier*, was so busy he did not know which way to turn himself. Three lads could not supply the drinkers. They filled the shop, the chambers, and the court even. D'Artagnan called Raoul's attention to this concourse, adding: "The fellow will have no excuse for not paying his rent. Look at those drinkers, Raoul; one would say they were jolly companions. *Mordieux!* why, there is no room anywhere!" D'Artagnan, however, contrived to catch hold of the master by the corner of his apron, and to make himself known to him.

"Ah, monsieur le chevalier!" said the *cabaretier*, half muzzy, "one

minute, if you please ; I have here a hundred mad devils turning my cellar upside down."

"The cellar, if you like, but not the money-box."

"Oh, monsieur, your thirty-seven and a half pistoles are all counted out ready for you, upstairs in my chamber ; but there are in that chamber thirty customers, who are sucking the staves of a little barrel of Oporto which I tapped for them this morning. Give me a minute—only a minute?"

"So be it—so be it."

"I will go," said Raoul, in a low voice, to D'Artagnan ; "this hilarity is the!"

"Monsieur," replied D'Artagnan, sternly, "you will please to remain where you are. The soldier ought to familiarise himself with all kinds of spectacles. There are in the eye, when it is young, fibres which we must learn how to harden ; and we are not truly generous and good but from the moment when the eye has become hardened, and the heart remains tender. Besides, my little Raoul, would you leave me alone here ? That would be very ill of you. Look, there is yonder, in the lower court, a tree, and under the shade of that tree we shall breathe more freely than in this atmosphere of spilt wine."

From the spot on which they had placed themselves, the two new guests the Image de Nôtre-Dame heard the ever-increasing murmurs of the life of people, and lost neither a cry nor a gesture of the drinkers at tables in the *cabaret* or disseminated in the chambers. If D'Artagnan had wished to place himself as a *vedette* for an expedition, he could not have succeeded better. The tree under which he and Raoul were seated covered them with its already thick foliage : it was a low, thick chestnut tree, with inclined branches, which cast their shade over a table so broken that the drinkers had abandoned it. We said that from this post D'Artagnan saw everything. He observed the goings and comings of the waiters, the arrival of fresh drinkers, the welcome, sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, given to certain new-comers by certain others that were installed. He observed all this to amuse himself, for the thirty-seven and a half pistoles were a long time coming. Raoul recalled his attention to it. "Monsieur," said he, "you do not hurry your tenant, and the condemned will soon be here. There will then be such a press, we shall not be able to get out."

"You are right," said the musketeer. "*Holà !* oh ! somebody there ! *Mordioux !*" But it was in vain he cried and knocked upon the wreck of the old table, which fell to pieces beneath his fist ; nobody came. D'Artagnan was preparing to go and seek the *cabaretier* himself, to force him to a definite explanation, when the door of the court in which he was with Raoul, a door which communicated with the garden situated at the back opened, and a man dressed as a cavalier, with his sword in the sheath, but not at his belt, crossed the court without closing the door, and, having cast an oblique glance at D'Artagnan and his companion, directed his course towards the *cabaret* itself, looking about in all directions with eyes capable of piercing walls or consciences. "Humph !" said D'Artagnan, "my tenants are communicating. That, no doubt, now, is some amateur in hanging matters." At the same moment, the cries and disturbance in the upper chambers ceased. Silence, under such circumstances, surprises more than a twofold increase of noise. D'Artagnan wished to see what was the cause of this sudden silence. He then perceived that this man, dressed as a cavalier, had just entered the principal chamber, and was haranguing the tipplers, who all listened to him with the greatest at-

tention. D'Artagnan would perhaps have heard his speech but for the dominant noise of the popular clamours, which made a formidable accompaniment to the harangue of the orator. But it was soon finished, and as the people the *cabaret* contained came out, one after the other, in little groups, so that there only remained six in the chamber. One of these, the man with the sword, took the *cabaretier* aside, engaging him in a course more or less serious; whilst the others lit a great fire in the chimney-place—a circumstance rendered strange by the fine weather and the heat.

"It is very singular," said D'Artagnan to Raoul, "but I think I know those faces yonder."

"Don't you think you can smell the smoke here?" said Raoul.

"I rather think I can smell a conspiracy," replied D'Artagnan.

He had not finished speaking, when four of these men came down into the court, and, without the appearance of any bad design, mounted guard at the door of communication, casting, at intervals, glances at D'Artagnan which signified many things.

"*Mordieux!*" said D'Artagnan, in a low voice, "there is something going on. Are you curious, Raoul?"

"According to the subject, chevalier."

"Well, I am as curious as an old woman. Come a little more in front, we shall get a better view of the place. I would lay a wager that view will be something curious."

"But you know, monsieur le chevalier, that I am not willing to become a passive and indifferent spectator of the death of the two poor devils."

"And I, then!—do you think I am a savage? We will go in again when it is time to do so. Come along!" And they made their way towards the front of the house, and placed themselves near the window, which, still more strangely than the rest, remained unoccupied. The two last drinkers, instead of looking out at this window, kept up the fire. On seeing D'Artagnan and his friend enter:—"Ah! ah! a reinforcement," murmured they.

D'Artagnan jogged Raoul's elbow. "Yes, my braves, a reinforcement," said he: "*cordieu!* there is a famous fire. Whom are you going to cook?"

The two men uttered a shout of jovial laughter, and, instead of answering, threw on more wood. D'Artagnan could not take his eyes off them.

"I suppose," said one of the fire-makers, "they sent you to tell us the time,—did not they?"

"Without doubt, they have," said D'Artagnan, anxious to know what was going on; "why should I be here else, if it were not for that?"

"Then place yourself at the window, if you please, and observe." D'Artagnan smiled in his moustache, made a sign to Raoul, and placed himself at the window.

## CHAPTER LXII.

### VIVE COLBERT!

THE spectacle which the Grève now presented was a frightful one. The heads, levelled by the perspective, extended afar, thick and agitated as the ears of corn in a vast plain. From time to time, a fresh report, or a distant rumour, made the heads oscillate and thousands of eyes flash.

Now and then there were great movements. All those ears of corn bent, and became waves more agitated than those of the ocean, which rolled from the extremities to the centre, and beat, like the tides, against the hedge of archers who surrounded the gibbets. Then the handles of the halberds were let fall upon the heads and shoulders of the rash invaders; at times, also, it was the steel as well as the wood, and, in that case, a large empty circle was formed around the guard; a space conquered upon the extremities, which underwent, in their turn, the oppression of the sudden movement, which drove them against the parapets of the Seine. From the window, that commanded a view of the whole Place, D'Artagnan saw, with interior satisfaction, that such of the musketeers and guards as found themselves involved in the crowd, were able, with blows of their fists and the hilts of their swords, to keep room. He even remarked that they had succeeded, by that *esprit de corps* which doubles the strength of the soldier, in getting together in one group to the amount of about fifty men; and that, with the exception of a dozen stragglers whom he still saw rolling here and there, the nucleus was complete, and within reach of his voice. But it was not the musketeers and guards only that drew the attention of D'Artagnan. Around the gibbets, and particularly at the entrances to the arcade of Saint-Jean, moved a noisy mass, a busy mass; glaring faces, resolute demeanours were to be seen here and there, mingled with silly faces and indifferent demeanours; signals were exchanged, hands given and taken. D'Artagnan remarked among the groups, and those groups the most animated, the face of the cavalier whom he had seen enter by the door of communication from his garden, and who had gone upstairs to harangue the drinkers. That man was organizing troops and giving orders. "*Mordieux!*" said D'Artagnan to himself, "I was not deceived; I know that man,—it is Menneville. What the devil is he doing here?"

A distant murmur, which became more distinct by degrees, stopped this reflection, and drew his attention another way. This murmur was occasioned by the arrival of the culprits; a strong picket of archers preceded them, and appeared at the angle of the arcade. The whole entire crowd now joined as if in one cry; all the cries united, formed one immense howl. D'Artagnan saw Raoul was becoming pale, and he slapped him roughly on the shoulder. The fire-keepers turned round on hearing the great cry, and asked what was going on. "The condemned are arrived," said D'Artagnan. "That's well," replied they, again replenishing the fire. D'Artagnan looked at them with much uneasiness; it was evident that these men who were making such a fire for no apparent purpose had some strange intentions. The condemned appeared upon the Place. They were walking, the executioner before them, whilst fifty archers formed a hedge on their right and their left. Both were dressed in black: they appeared pale but firm. They looked impatiently over the people's heads, standing on tip-toe at every step. D'Artagnan remarked this. "*Mordieux!*" cried he, "they are in a great hurry to get a sight of the gibbet!" Raoul drew back, without, however, having the power to leave the window. Terror even has its attractions.

"To the death! to the death!" cried fifty-thousand voices.

"Yes, to the death!" howled a hundred frantic others, as if the great mass had given them the reply.

"To the halter! to the halter!" cried the great whole; "*Vive le roi!*"

"Well," said D'Artagnan, "this is droll; I should have thought it was M. Colbert who had caused them to be hung."

There was, at this moment, a great rolling movement in the crowd which stopped for a moment the march of the condemned. The people of a bold and resolute mien, whom D'Artagnan had observed, by dint of pressing, pushing, and lifting themselves up, had succeeded in almost touching the hedge of archers. The *cortège* resumed its march. All at once, to cries of "*Vive Colbert !*" those men, of whom D'Artagnan never lost sight, fell upon the escort, which in vain endeavoured to stand against them. Behind these men was the crowd. Then commenced, amidst a frightful tumult, as frightful a confusion. This time, there were something more than cries of expectation or cries of joy, there were cries of pain. Halberts struck men down, swords ran them through, muskets were discharged at them. The confusion became then so great that D'Artagnan could no longer distinguish anything. Then, from this chaos, suddenly surged something like a visible intention, like a will pronounced. The condemned had been torn from the hands of the guards, and were being dragged towards the house of L'Image-de-Nôtre-Dame. Those who dragged them shouted "*Vive Colbert !*" The people hesitated, not knowing which they ought to fall upon, the archers or the aggressors. When they stopped the people was, that those who cried "*Vive Colbert !*" began to cry, at the same time, "No halter ! no halter ! to the fire ! to the fire ! burn the thieves ! burn the extortioners !" This cry, shouted with an *ensemble*, obtained enthusiastic success. The populace had come to witness an execution, and here was an opportunity offered them of performing one themselves. It was this that must be most agreeable to the populace ; therefore, they ranged themselves immediately on the party of the aggressors against the archers, crying with the minority, which had become, thanks to them, the most compact majority. "Yes, yes ; to the fire with the thieves ! *Vive Colbert !*"

"*Mordioux !*" exclaimed D'Artagnan, "this begins to look serious."

One of the men who remained near the chimney approached the window, a fire-brand in his hand. "Ah, ah ?" said he, "it gets warm." Then, turning to his companion, "There is the signal," added he ; and he immediately applied the burning brand to the wainscoting. Now, this *cabaret* of the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame was not a very newly-built house ; and, therefore, did not require much entreating to take fire. In a second the boards began to crackle, and the flames arose sparkling to the ceiling. A howling from without replied to the shouts of the incendiaries. D'Artagnan, who had not seen what passed, from being engaged at the window, felt, at the same time, the smoke which choked him and the fire that scorched him. "*Holà !*" cried he, turning round, "is the fire here ? Are you drunk or mad, my masters ?"

The two men looked at each other with an air of astonishment. "In what ?" asked they of D'Artagnan ; "was it not a thing agreed upon ?"

"A thing agreed upon that you should burn my house !" vociferated D'Artagnan, snatching the brand from the hand of the incendiary, and striking him with it across the face. The second wanted to assist his comrade, but Raoul, seizing him by the middle, threw him out of the window, whilst D'Artagnan pushed his man down the stairs. Raoul, first disengaged, tore the burning wainscoting down, and threw it flaming into the chamber. At a glance, D'Artagnan saw there was nothing to be feared from the fire, and sprang to the window. The disorder was at its height. The air was filled with simultaneous cries of "To the fire !" "To the death !" "To the halter !" "To the stake !" "*Vive Colbert !*" "*Vive le roi !*" The group which had forced the culprits from the hands of the

archers had drawn close to the house, which appeared to be the goal towards which they dragged them. Menneville was at the head of this group, shouting louder than all the others, "To the fire ! to the fire ! *Vive Colbert !*" D'Artagnan began to comprehend what was meant. They wanted to burn the condemned, and his house was to serve as a funeral pile. "Halt here !" cried he, sword in hand, and one foot upon the window. "Menneville, what do you want to do ?"

"Monsieur D'Artagnan," cried the latter ; "give way, give way !"

"To the fire ! to the fire with the thieves ? *Vive Colbert !*"

These cries exasperated D'Artagnan. "*Mordieux !*" said he. "What ! burn the poor devils who are only condemned to be hung ? that is infamous !"

Before the door, however, the mass of anxious spectators, rolled back against the walls, had become more thick, and closed up the way. Menneville and his men, who were dragging along the culprits, were within a few paces of the door.

Menneville made a last effort. "Passage ! passage !" cried he, pistol in hand.

"Burn them ! burn them !" repeated the crowd. "The Image-de-Nôtre-Dame is on fire ! Burn the thieves ! burn the monopolists in the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame !"

There now remained no doubt, it was plainly D'Artagnan's house that was their object. D'Artagnan remembered the old cry, always so effective from his mouth : "*A moi, mousquetaires !*" shouted he, with the voice of a giant, with one of those voices which dominate over cannon, the sea, the tempest. "*A moi, mousquetaires !*" And suspending himself by the arm from the balcony, he allowed himself to drop amidst the crowd, which began to draw back from a house that rained men. Raoul was on the ground as soon as he, both sword in hand. All the musketeers on the Place heard that challenging cry—all turned round at that cry, and recognized D'Artagnan. "To the captain, to the captain !" cried they, in their turn. And the crowd opened before them as if before the prow of a vessel. At that moment D'Artagnan and Menneville found themselves face to face. "Passage, passage !" cried Menneville, seeing that he was within an arm's length of the door.

"No one passes here," said D'Artagnan.

"Take that, then !" said Menneville, firing his pistol, almost within touch. But before the cock had dropped, D'Artagnan had struck up Menneville's arm with the hilt of his sword, and passed the blade through his body.

"I told you plainly to keep yourself quiet," said D'Artagnan to Menneville, who rolled at his feet.

"Passage ! passage !" cried the companions of Menneville, at first terrified, but soon recovering, when they found they had only to do with two men. But those two men were hundred-armed giants : the sword flies about in their hands like the burning *glaive* of the archangel. It pierces with its point, strikes with its back, cuts with its edge ; every stroke brings down its man. "For the king !" cried D'Artagnan, to every man he struck at, that is to say, to every man that fell. This cry became the charging word for the musketeers, who, guided by it, joined D'Artagnan. During this time the archers, recovering from the panic they had undergone, charge the aggressors in the rear, and regular as mill-strokes, overturn or knock down all that oppose them. The crowd, which sees swords gleaming, and drops of blood flying in the air—the crowd falls back, and crushes itself,

At length cries for mercy and of despair resound ; that is, the farewell of the vanquished. The two condemned are again in the hands of the archers. D'Artagnan approaches them, and seeing them pale and sinking : " Console yourselves, poor men," said he, " you will not undergo the frightful torture with which these wretches threatened you. The king has condemned you to be hung : you shall only be hung. Go on, hang them, and it will be over."

There is no longer anything going on at the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame. The fire has been extinguished with two tuns of wine in default of water. The conspirators have fled by the garden. The archers were dragging the culprits to the gibbets. From this moment the affair did not occupy much time. The executioner, heedless about operating according to the rules of art, made such haste, that he despatched the condemned in a minute. In the meantime, the people gathered around D'Artagnan—they felicitated, they cheered him. He wiped his brow, streaming with sweat and his sword, streaming with blood. He shrugged his shoulders at seeing Menneville writhing at his feet in the last convulsions ; and, while Raoul turned away his eyes in compassion, he pointed up to the musketeers the gibbets laden with their melancholy fruit. " Poor devils !" said he, " I hope they died blessing me, for I saved them narrowly." These words caught the ear of Menneville, at the moment when he himself was breathing his last sigh. A dark, ironical smile flitted across his lips ; he wished to reply, but the effort hastened the snapping of the chord of life—he expired.

" Oh ! all this is very frightful !" murmured Raoul : " let us be gone, monsieur le chevalier."

" You are not wounded ?" asked D'Artagnan.

" Not at all ; thank you."

" That's well ! Thou art a brave fellow, *mordieux* ! The head of the father, and the arm of Porthos. Ah ! if he had been here, that Porthos, you would have seen something worth looking at."

Then, as if by way of remembrance,—

" But where the devil can that brave Porthos be ?" murmured D'Artagnan.

" Come, chevalier, pray come !" urged Raoul.

" One minute, my friend ; let me take my thirty-seven and a half pistoles, and I shall be at your service. The house is a good property," added D'Artagnan, as he entered the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame, " but decidedly, even if it were less profitable, I should prefer its being in another quarter."

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## CHAPTER LXIII.

HOW THE DIAMOND OF M. D'EYMERIS PASSED INTO THE HANDS OF M. D'ARTAGNAN.

WHILST this violent, noisy, and bloody scene was passing on the Grève, several men, barricaded behind the gate of communication with the garden, replaced their swords in their sheaths, assisted one among them to mount a ready saddled horse which was waiting in the garden, and like a flock of terrified birds, fled away in all directions, some climbing the walls, others rushing out at the gates, with all the fury of a panic. He who mounted the horse, and who gave him the spur so sharply that the animal was near leaping the wall, this cavalier, we say, crossed the Place Bau-

oyer, passed like lightning before the crowd in the streets, riding against, running over, and knocking down all that came in his way, and, ten minutes after, arrived at the gates of the surintendant, more out of breath than his horse. The Abbé Fouquet, at the clatter of the hoofs on the pavement, appeared at a window of the court, and before even the cavalier had set foot to the ground, "Well ! Danecamp ?" cried he, leaning half out at the window.

"Well, it is all over," replied the cavalier.

"All over !" cried the abbé ; "then they are saved ?"

"No, monsieur," replied the cavalier, "they are hung."

"Hung !" repeated the abbé, turning pale. A lateral door suddenly opened, and Fouquet appeared in the chamber, pale, distracted, with lips half opened, breathing a cry of grief and anger. He stopped upon the threshold to listen to what was addressed from the court to the window.

"Miserable wretches !" said the abbé, "you did not fight, then ?"

"Like lions."

"Say like cowards."

"Monsieur !"

"A hundred men accustomed to war, sword in hand, are worth ten thousand archers in a surprise. Where is Menneville, that boaster, that raggart, who was to come back either dead or a conqueror ?"

"Well, monsieur, he has kept his word ; he is dead !"

"Dead ! Who killed him ?"

"A demon, disguised as a man, a giant armed with ten flaming swords, a madman, who at one blow extinguished the fire, extinguished the riot, and caused a hundred musketeers to rise up out of the pavement of the Place de Grève."

Fouquet raised his brow, streaming with sweat, murmuring, "Oh ! Lyodot and D'Eymeris ! dead ! dead ! dead ! and I dishonoured."

The abbé turned round, and perceiving his brother despairing and livid, "Come, come," said he, "it is a blow of fate, monsieur ; we must not lament thus. As it is not effected, it is because God——"

"Be silent, abbé ! be silent !" cried Fouquet ; "your excuses are blasphemies. Order that man up here, and let him relate the details of this horrible event."

"But, brother——"

"Obey, monsieur !"

The abbé made a sign, and in half a minute the step of the man was heard upon the stairs. At the same time Gourville appeared behind Fouquet, like the guardian angel of the surintendant, pressing one finger upon his lips to enjoin observation even amidst the bursts of his grief. The minister resumed all the serenity that human strength could leave at the disposal of a heart half broken with sorrow. Danecamp appeared.

"Make your report," said Gourville.

"Monsieur," replied the messenger, "we received orders to carry off the prisoners, and to cry '*Vive Colbert !*' whilst carrying them off."

"To burn them alive, was it not, abbé ?" interrupted Gourville.

"Yes, yes, the order was given to Menneville. Menneville knew what was to be done, and Menneville is dead." This news appeared rather to reassure Gourville than to sadden him.

"Yes, certainly, to burn them alive," said the abbé, eagerly.

"Granted, monsieur, granted," said the man, looking into the eyes and the faces of the two interlocutors, to ascertain what there was profitable or disadvantageous to himself in telling the truth.

"Now proceed," said Gourville.

"The prisoners," continued Danecamp, "were brought to the Grève, and the people, in a fury, insisted upon their being burnt instead of being hung."

"And the people were right," said the abbé. "Go on."

"But," resumed the man, "at the moment the archers were broken, at the moment the fire was set to one of the houses of the Place, destined to serve as a funeral-pile for the guilty, the fury, the demon, the giant of whom I told you, and who, we had been informed, was the proprietor of the house in question, aided by a young man who accompanied him, threw out of the window those who kept up the fire, called to his assistance the musketeers who were in the crowd, leaped himself from the window of the first story into the place, and plied his sword so desperately that the victory was restored to the archers, the prisoners were retaken, and Menneville killed. When once recaptured, the condemned were executed in three minutes." Fouquet, in spite of his self-command, could not prevent a deep groan from escaping him.

"And this man, the proprietor of the house, what is his name?" said the abbé.

"I cannot tell you, never having been able to get sight of him; my post had been appointed in the garden, and I remained at my post; only the affair was related to me as I repeat it. I was ordered, when once the thing was ended, to come at best speed and announce to you the manner in which it finished. According to this order, I set out, full gallop, and here I am."

"Very well, monsieur, we have nothing else to ask of you," said the abbé, more and more dejected, in proportion as the moment approached for finding himself alone with his brother.

"Have you been paid?" asked Gourville.

"Partly, monsieur," replied Danecamp.

"Here are twenty pistoles. Begone, monsieur, and never forget to defend, as this time has been done, the true interests of the king."

"Yes, monsieur," said the man, bowing and pocketing the money. After which he went out. Scarcely had the door closed after him when Fouquet, who had remained motionless, advanced with a rapid step, and stood between the abbé and Gourville. Both of them at the same instant opened their mouths to speak to him. "No excuses," said he, "no recriminations against anybody. If I had not been a false friend, I should not have confided to any one the care of delivering Lyodot and D'Eymeris. I alone am guilty; to me alone are reproaches and remorse due. Leave me, abbé."

"And yet, monsieur, you will not prevent me," replied the latter, "from endeavouring to find out the miserable fellow who has intervened for the advantage of M. Colbert, in this so well-arranged affair; for, if it is good policy to love our friends dearly, I do not believe that is bad which consists in pursuing our enemies with inveteracy."

"A truce to policy, abbé; be gone, I beg of you, and do not let me hear any more of you till I send for you; what we most need is circumspection and silence. You have a terrible example before you, gentlemen; no reprisals, I forbid them."

"There are no orders," grumbled the abbé, "which will prevent me from avenging a family affront upon the guilty person."

"And I," cried Fouquet, in that imperative tone to which one feels there is nothing to reply, "if you entertain one thought, one single thought, which is not the absolute expression of my will, I will have you cast into

the Bastille, two hours after that thought has manifested itself. Regulate your conduct accordingly, abbé."

The abbé coloured and bowed. Fouquet made a sign to Gourville to follow him, and was already directing his steps towards his cabinet, when the usher announced with a loud voice: "Monsieur le Chevalier d'Artagnan."

"Who is he?" said Fouquet negligently to Gourville.

"An ex-licutenant of his majesty's musketeers," replied Gourville, in the same tone. Fouquet did not even take the trouble to reflect, and resumed his walk. "I beg your pardon, monseigneur!" said Gourville, "but I have remembered; this brave man has quitted the king's service, and probably comes to receive a quarter of some pension or other."

"Devil take him!" said Fouquet, "why does he choose his time so ill?"

"Permit me then, monseigneur, to announce your refusal to him; for he is one of my acquaintance, and is a man whom, in our present circumstances, it would be better to have as a friend than an enemy."

"Answer him as you please," said Fouquet.

"Eh! good Lord!" said the abbé, still full of malice, like an egotistical man; "tell him there is no money, particularly for musketeers."

But scarcely had the abbé uttered this imprudent speech, when the partly-open door was thrown back, and D'Artagnan appeared.

"Eh! Monsieur Fouquet," said he, "I was well aware there was no money for musketeers here. Therefore I did not come to obtain any, but have it refused. That being done, receive my thanks. I give you good-day, and will go and seek it at M. Colbert's." And he went out, after making an easy bow.

"Gourville," said Fouquet, "run after that man and bring him back."

Gourville obeyed, and overtook D'Artagnan on the stairs. D'Artagnan, hearing steps behind him, turned round and perceived Gourville. "*Mor-dioux!* my dear monsieur," said he, "these are sad lessons which you gentlemen of finance teach us;—I come to M. Fouquet, to receive a sum accorded by his majesty, and I am received like a mendicant who comes to ask charity, or like a thief who comes to steal a piece of plate."

"But you pronounced the name of M. Colbert, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan; you said you were going to M. Colbert's?"

"I certainly am going there, were it only to ask satisfaction of the people who try to burn houses, crying '*Vive Colbert!*'"

Gourville pricked up his ears. "Oh, oh!" said he, "you allude to what has just happened at the Grève?"—"Yes, certainly."

"And in what did that which has taken place concern you?"

"What! do you ask me whether it concerns me, or does not concern me, if M. Colbert pleases to make a funeral-pile of my house?"

"So, your house——was it your house they wanted to burn?"

"*Pardieu!* was it!"

"Is the *cabaret* of the Image-de-Nôtre-Dame yours, then?"

"It has been this week."

"Well, then, are you the brave captain, are you the valiant blade, who dispersed those who wished to burn the condemned?"

"My dear Monsieur Gourville, put yourself in my place; I am an agent of the public force and a proprietor. As a captain, it is my duty to have the orders of the king accomplished. As a proprietor, it is my interest my house should not be burnt. I have then at the same time attended to the laws of interest and duty in replacing Messrs. Lyodot and D'Eymeris in the hands of the archers."

"Then it was you who threw the man out of the window?"

"It was I, myself," replied D'Artagnan, modestly.

"And you who killed Menneville?"

"I had that misfortune," said D'Artagnan, bowing like a man who is being congratulated.

"It was you then, in short, who caused the two condemned persons to be hung?"

"Instead of being burnt, yes, monsieur, and I am proud of it. I saved the poor devils from horrible tortures. Understand, my dear Monsieur de Gourville, that they wanted to burn them alive! It exceeds imagination."

"Go, my dear Monsieur d'Artagnan, go," said Gourville, anxious to spare Fouquet the sight of a man who had just caused him such profound grief.

"No," said Fouquet, who had heard all from the door of the ante-chamber; "not so; on the contrary, Monsieur d'Artagnan, come in."

D'Artagnan wiped from the hilt of his sword a last bloody trace, which had escaped his notice, and returned. He then found himself face to face with these three men, whose countenances wore very different expressions: with the abbé it was anger, with Gourville it was stupor, with Fouquet it was dejection.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur le ministre," said D'Artagnan, "but my time is short; I have to go to the office of the intendant, to have an explanation with Monsieur Colbert, and to take my quarter's pension."

"But, monsieur," said Fouquet, "there is money here." D'Artagnan looked at the surintendant with astonishment. "You have been answered inconsiderately, monsieur, I know, because I heard it," said the minister. "a man of your merit ought to be known by everybody." D'Artagnan bowed. "Have you an order?" added Fouquet.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Give it me, I will pay you myself; come with me." He made a sign to Gourville and the abbé, who remained in the chamber where they were. He led D'Artagnan into his cabinet. As soon as the door was shut.

"How much is due to you, monsieur?"

"Why, something like five thousand livres, monseigneur."

"For your arrears of pay?"

"For a quarter's pay."

"A quarter consisting of five thousand livres!" said Fouquet, fixing upon the musketeer a searching look. "Does the king, then, give you twenty thousand livres a year?"

"Yes, monseigneur, twenty thousand livres a year; do you think it is too much?"

"I?" cried Fouquet, and he smiled bitterly. "If I had any knowledge of mankind, if I were—instead of being a frivolous, inconsequent, and vain spirit—of a prudent and reflective spirit; if, in a word, I had, as certain persons have known how, regulated my life, you would not receive twenty thousand lives a year, but a hundred thousand, and you would not belong to the king but to me."

D'Artagnan coloured slightly. There is in the manner in which an eulogium is given, in the voice of the eulogizer, in his affectionate tone, a poison so sweet, that the strongest mind is sometimes intoxicated by it. The surintendant terminated this speech by opening a drawer, and taking from it four *rouleaux*, which he placed before D'Artagnan. The Gascon opened one. "Gold!" said he.

"It will be less burdensome, monsieur."

"But then, monsieur, these make twenty thousand livres."

"No doubt they do."

"But only five are due to me."

"I wish to spare you the trouble of coming four times to my office."

"You overwhelm me, monsieur."

"I do only what I ought to do, monsieur le chevalier ; and I hope you will not bear me any malice on account of the rude reception my brother gave you. He is of a sour, capricious disposition."

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "believe me nothing would grieve me more than an excuse from you."

"Therefore I will make no more, and will content myself with asking you a favour."

"Oh, monsieur."

Fouquet drew from his finger a ring worth about a thousand pistoles. "Monsieur," said he, "this stone was given me by a friend of my childhood, by a man to whom you have rendered a great service."

"A service—I ?" said the musketeer ; "I have rendered a service to one of your friends ?"

"You cannot have forgotten it, monsieur, for it dates this very day."

"And that friend's name was—— ?"

"M. d'Eymeris."

"One of the condemned ?"

"Yes, one of the victims. Well ! Monsieur d'Artagnan, in return for the service you have rendered him, I beg you to accept this diamond. Do so for my sake."

"Monsieur ! you——"

"Accept it, I say. To-day is with me a day of mourning ; hereafter you will, perhaps, learn why ; to-day I have lost one friend ; well, I will try to get another."

"But, Monsieur Fouquet——"

"Adieu ! Monsieur d'Artagnan, adieu !" cried Fouquet, with much emotion ; "or rather, *au revoir*." And the minister quitted the cabinet, leaving in the hands of the musketeer the ring and the twenty thousand livres.

"Oh ! oh !" said D'Artagnan, after a moment's dark reflection. "Do I understand what this means ? *Mordieux !* I can understand so far, he is a gallant man ; I will go and explain matters with M. Colbert." And he went out.

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## CHAPTER LXIV.

OF THE NOTABLE DIFFERENCE D'ARTAGNAN FINDS BETWEEN MONSIEUR THE INTENDANT AND MONSIEUR THE SURINTENDANT.

M. COLBERT resided Rue Neuve des Petits-champs, in a house which had belonged to Beautru. The legs of D'Artagnan cleared the distance in a short quarter of an hour. When he arrived at the residence of the new favourite, the court was full of archers and police-people, who came to congratulate him, or to excuse themselves, according to whether he should choose to praise or blame. The sentiment of flattery is instinctive among people of abject condition ; they have the sense of it, as the wild animal has that of hearing and smell. These people, or their leader, had then understood that there was a pleasure to offer to M. Colbert, in rendering him an account of the fashion in which his name had been pronounced

during the rash enterprise of the morning. D'Artagnan made his appearance just as the chief of the watch was giving his report. D'Artagnan stood close to the door, behind the archers. That officer took Colbert on one side, in spite of his resistance and the contraction of his great eyes and brows. "In case," said he, "you really desired, monsieur, that the people should do justice on the two traitors, it would have been wise to warn us of it; for indeed, monsieur, in spite of our regret at displeasing you, and thwarting your views, we had our orders to execute."

"Triple fool!" replied Colbert, furiously shaking his hair, thick and black as a mane; "what are you telling me there? What! that I could have had an idea of a riot! Are you mad or drunk?"

"But, monsieur, they cried '*Vive Colbert!*'" replied the trembling watch.

"A handful of conspirators——"

"No, no; a mass of people."

"Ah! indeed," said Colbert, expanding. "A mass of people cried '*Vive Colbert!*' Are you certain of what you say, monsieur?"

"We had nothing to do but to open our ears, or rather to close them, so terrible were the cries."

"And this was from the people, the real people?"

"Certainly, monsieur; only these real people beat us."

"Oh! very well," continued Colbert, thoughtfully. "Then you suppose it was the people alone who wished to burn the condemned?"

"Oh! yes, monsieur!"

"That is quite another thing. You strongly resisted, then?"

"We had three men stifled, monsieur."

"But you killed nobody yourselves?"

"Monsieur, a few of the rioters were left upon the square, and one among them was not a common man."

"Who was he?"

"A certain Menneville, upon whom the police have a long time had an eye."

"Menneville!" cried Colbert, "what, he who killed, Rue de la Hochette, a worthy man who wanted a fat fowl!"

"Yes, monsieur; the same."

And did this Menneville also cry, '*Vive Colbert!*'"

"Louder than all the rest; like a madman."

The brow of Colbert became cloudy and wrinkled. A kind of ambitious glory which had lighted his face was extinguished, like the light of those glow-worms which we crush beneath the grass. "What then do you say," resumed the deceived intendant, "that the initiative came from the people? Menneville was my enemy; I would have had him hung, and he knew it well. Menneville belonged to the Albé Fouquet—all the affair originated with Fouquet; does not everybody know that the condemned were his friends from childhood?"

"That is true," thought D'Artagnan, "And there are all my doubts cleared up. I repeat it, Monsieur Fouquet may be what they please, but he is a gentlemanly man."

"And," continued Colbert, "are you quite sure Menneville is dead?"

D'Artagnan thought the time was come for him to make his appearance. "Perfectly, monsieur," replied he, advancing suddenly.

"Oh! is that you, monsieur?" said Colbert.

"In person," replied the musketeer, with his deliberate tone, "it appears that you had in Menneville a pretty little enemy."

"It was not I, monsieur, who had an enemy," replied Colbert ; "it was the king."

"Double brute !" thought D'Artagnan, "to think to play the great man the hypocrite with me. Well," continued he to Colbert, "I am very happy to have rendered so good a service to the king ; will you take upon you to tell his majesty, monsieur l'intendant ?"

"What commission do you give me, and what do you charge me to tell his majesty, monsieur ? Be precise, if you please," said Colbert, in a sharp tone, tuned beforehand to hostility.

"I give you no commission," replied D'Artagnan, with that calmness which never abandons the banterer. "I thought it would be easy for you to announce to his majesty that it was I, who, being there by chance, did justice upon Menneville, and restored things to order."

Colbert opened his eyes, and interrogated the chief of the watch with astonishment—"Ah ! it is very true," said the latter, "that this gentleman saved

me. What did you tell me, monsieur, that you are come to relate me this ?" said Colbert with envy ; "everything is explained, and better for you than any other."

"You are in error, monsieur l'intendant, I did not at all come for the purpose of relating that to you."

"It is an exploit, nevertheless."

"Oh !" said the musketeer carelessly, "constant habit blunts the point."

"To what do I owe the honour of your visit, then ?"

"Simply to this : the king ordered me to come to you."

"Ah !" said Colbert, recovering himself, because he saw D'Artagnan draw a paper from his pocket ; "it is to demand some money of me ?"

"Precisely, monsieur."

"Have the goodness to wait, if you please, monsieur, till I have detached the report of the watch."

D'Artagnan turned round upon his heel, insolently enough, and finding himself face to face with Colbert, after this first turn, he bowed to him as a valet would have done ; then, after a second evolution, he directed his steps towards the door in quick time. Colbert was struck with his unexpected rudeness, to which he was not accustomed. In general, men of the sword, when they came to his office, had such a want of money, that though their feet had taken root in the marble, they would not have lost their patience. Was D'Artagnan going straight to the king ? Would he announce and describe his bad reception, or recount his exploit ? This was a grave matter of consideration. At all events, the moment was badly chosen to send D'Artagnan away, whether he came from the king, or on his own account. The musketeer had rendered too great a service, and that too recently, for it to be already forgotten. Therefore Colbert thought it would be better to shake off his arrogance, and call D'Artagnan back. "Ho ! Monsieur D'Artagnan," cried Colbert, "what ! are you leaving me thus ?"

D'Artagnan turned round : "Why not ?" said he quietly, "we have more to say to each other, have we ?"

"You have at least money to take, as you have an order ?"

"Who, I ? Oh ! not at all, my dear Monsieur Colbert."

"But, monsieur, you have an order ! And in the same manner as you receive a sword-thrust, when you are required, I, on my part, pay when an order is presented to me. Present yours."

"It is useless, my dear Monsieur Colbert," said D'Artagnan, who warmly enjoyed the confusion introduced into the ideas of Colbert ; order is paid."

"Paid, by whom?"

"By monsieur le surintendant."—Colbert became pale.

"Explain yourself, then," said he in a stifled voice—"if you are p why do you show me that paper?"

"In consequence of the word of order of which you spoke to m ingeniously just now, dear M. Colbert ; the king told me to take a qua of the pension he is pleased to make me."

"Of me?" said Colbert.

"Not exactly. The king said to me : 'Go to M. Fouquet ; the surintendant will, perhaps, have no money, then you will go and draw it of Colbert.'"

The countenance of M. Colbert brightened for a moment ; but it v with his unfortunate physiognomy as with a stormy sky, sometimes radi sometimes dark as night, according as the lightning gleams or the clo passes. "Eh ! and was there any money in the surintendant's coffer asked he.

"Why, yes, he could not be badly off for money," replied D'Artagna "it may be believed, since M. Fouquet, instead of paying me a quarter five thousand livres——"

"A quarter, of five thousand livres !" cried Colbert, struck, as Fouq had been, with the largeness of the sum destined to pay a soldier ; "w that would be a pension of twenty thousand livres !"

"Exactly, M. Colbert. *Peste !* you reckon like old Pythagoras ; y twenty thousand livres."

"Ten times the appointment of an intendant of the finances. I beg offer you my compliments," said Colbert, with a venomous smile.

"Oh !" said D'Artagnan, "the king apologised for giving me so litt but he promised to make it more hereafter, when he should be rich ; I must be gone, having much to do——"

"So, then, notwithstanding the expectation of the king, the surintend paid you, did he?"

"In the same manner as, in opposition to the king's expectation, y refused to pay me."

"I did not refuse, monsieur ; I only begged you to wait. And you s that M. Fouquet paid you your five thousand livres?"

"Yes, as you might have done ; but he did still better than that, M Colbert."

"And what did he do?"

"He politely counted me down the totality of the sum, saying that, fo the king, his coffers were always full."

"The totality of the sum ! M. Fouquet has given you twenty thousan livres instead of five thousand?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And what for?"

"In order to spare me three visits to the money-chest of the surintendant so that I have the twenty thousand livres in my pocket in good new coin You see, then, that I am able to go away without standing in need of you having come here only for form's sake." And D'Artagnan slapped hi hand upon his pocket, with a laugh which disclosed to Colbert thirty-two magnificent teeth, as white as teeth of twenty-five years old, and which seemed to say in their language, "Serve up to us thirty-two little Colberts

and we will grind them willingly." The serpent is as brave as the lion, the hawk as courageous as the eagle—that cannot be contested. It can only be said of animals that are decidedly cowardly, and are so called, that they will not be brave when they have to defend themselves. Colbert was not frightened at the thirty-two teeth of D'Artagnan; he recovered, and suddenly, "Monsieur," said he, "monsieur le surintendant has done what he had no right to do."

"What do you mean by that?" replied D'Artagnan.

"I mean that your note—will you let me see your note, if you please?"

"Very willingly; here it is."

Colbert seized the paper with an eagerness which the musketeer did not remark without uneasiness, and particularly without a certain degree of regret at having trusted him with it. "Well, monsieur, the royal order says this: 'At sight, I command that there be paid to M. d'Artagnan the sum of five thousand livres, forming a quarter of the pension I have made him.'"

"So, in fact, it is written," said D'Artagnan, affecting calmness.

"Very likely; the king only owed you five thousand livres. Why has more been given to you?"

"Because there was more, and M. Fouquet was willing to give me more. That does not concern anybody."

"It is natural," said Colbert, with a proud ease, "that you should be ignorant of the usages of *comptabilité*; but, monsieur, when you have a thousand livres to pay, what do you do?"

"I never have a thousand livres to pay," replied D'Artagnan.

"Once more," said Colbert, irritated—"once more, if you had any sum to pay, would you not pay what you ought?"

"That only proves one thing," said D'Artagnan, "and that is, that you have your particular customs in *comptabilité*, and M. Fouquet has his own."

"Mine, monsieur, are the correct ones."

"I do not say they are not."

"And you have received what was not due to you."

The eye of D'Artagnan flashed. "What is not due to me yet, you meant to say, M. Colbert; for if I had received what was not due to me at all, I should have committed a theft."

Colbert made no reply to this subtlety. "You then owe fifteen thousand livres to the public chest," said he, carried away by his jealous ardour.

"Then you must give me credit for them," replied D'Artagnan, with his imperceptible irony.

"Not at all, monsieur."

"Well, what will you do, then? You will not take my *rouleaux* from me, will you?"

"You must return them to my chest."

"I! Oh, Monsieur Colbert, don't reckon upon that!"

"The king wants his money, monsieur."

"And I, monsieur, I want the king's money."

"That may be; but you must return this."

"Not a sou. I have always understood that in matters of *comptabilité*, as you call it, a good cashier never gives back or takes back."

"Then, monsieur, we shall see what the king will say about it. I will show him this note, which proves that M. Fouquet not only pays what he does not owe, but that he does not even take care of the receipts for what he has paid."

"Ah! now I understand why you have taken that paper, M. Colbert!"

Colbert did not perceive all that there was of a threatening character in his name pronounced in a certain manner. "You shall see hereafter what use I will make of it," said he, holding up the paper in his fingers.

"Oh!" said D'Artagnan, snatching the paper from him with a rapid movement; "I understand it perfectly well, M. Colbert; I have no occasion to wait for that." And he crumpled up in his pocket the paper he had so cleverly seized.

"Monsieur, monsieur!" cried Colbert, "that is violence!"

"Nonsense! you must not be particular about the manners of a soldier!" replied D'Artagnan. "I kiss your hands, my dear M. Colbert." And he went out, laughing in the face of the future minister.

"That man, now," muttered he, "was about to adore me; it is a great pity I was obliged to cut company so soon."

## CHAPTER LXV.

### PHILOSOPHY OF THE HEART AND MIND.

FOR a man who had seen so many much more dangerous ones, the position of D'Artagnan with respect to M. Colbert was only comic. D'Artagnan therefore, did not deny himself the satisfaction of laughing at the expense of monsieur l'intendant, from the Rue des Petits-Champs to the Rue des Lombards. It was a great while since D'Artagnan had laughed so long together. He was still laughing when Planchet appeared, laughing likewise, at the door of his house; for Planchet, since the return of his patron since the entrance of the English guineas, passed the greater part of his life in doing what D'Artagnan had only done from Rue-Neuve des Petits Champs to the Rue des Lombards.

"You are come, then, my dear master?" said Planchet.

"No, my friend," replied the musketeer; "I am going, and that quickly. I will sup with you, go to bed, sleep five hours, and at break of day lead into my saddle. Has my horse had an extra feed?"

"Eh! my dear master," replied Planchet, "you know very well that your horse is the jewel of the family; that my lads are caressing it all day, and cramming it with sugar, nuts, and biscuits. You ask me if he has had an extra feed of oats; you should ask if he has not had enough to burst him."

"Very well, Planchet, that is all right. Now, then, I pass to what concerns me—my supper?"

"Ready. A smoking roast joint, white wine, crayfish, and fresh-gathered cherries. All ready, my master."

"You are a capital fellow, Planchet; come on, then, let us sup, and I will go to bed."

During supper D'Artagnan observed that Planchet kept rubbing his forehead, as if to facilitate the issue of some idea closely pent within his brain. He looked with an air of kindness at this worthy companion of his former crosses, and clinking glass against glass, "Come, Planchet," said he, "let us see what it is that gives you so much trouble to bring it forth. *Mordieux!* speak freely, and quickly."

"Well, this is it," replied Planchet: "you appear to me to be going on some expedition or other."

"I don't say that I am not."

"Then you have some new idea?"

"That is possible, too, Planchet."

"Then there will be a fresh capital to be ventured. I will lay down a thousand lives upon the idea you are about to carry out." And so saying, Planchet rubbed his hands one against the other with a rapidity inducing great delight.

"Planchet," said D'Artagnan, "there is but one misfortune in it."

"And what is that?"

"That the idea is not mine. I can risk nothing upon it." These words drew a deep sigh from the heart of Planchet. That Avarice is an ardent unseller; she carries away her man, as Satan did Jesus, to the mountain, and when once she has shown to an unfortunate all the kingdoms of the earth, she is able to repose herself, knowing full well that she has left her companion Envy to gnaw his heart. Planchet had tasted of riches easily acquired, and was never afterwards likely to stop in his desires; but he had a good heart in spite of his covetousness, as he adored D'Artagnan, he could not refrain from making him a thousand recommendations, each more affectionate than the others. He would not have been sorry, nevertheless, to have caught a little hint of the secret his master concealed so well: tricks, turns, counsels, and traps were all useless, D'Artagnan let nothing confidential escape him. The evening passed thus. After supper the portmanteau occupied D'Artagnan; he took a turn in the stable, patted his horse, and examined his shoes and legs; then, having counted over his money, he went to bed, sleeping as if only twenty, because he had neither inquietude nor remorse; he closed his eyes five minutes after he had blown out his lamp. Many events might, however, have kept him awake. Thought boiled in his brain, conjectures abounded, and D'Artagnan was a great drawer of horoscopes; but, with that imperishable phlegm which does more than genius for the fortune and happiness of men of action, he put off reflection till the next day, for fear, he said, not to be fresh when he wanted to be so.

The day came. The Rue des Lombards had its share of the caresses of Aurora with the rosy fingers, and D'Artagnan rose like Aurora. He did not awaken anybody; he placed his portmanteau under his arm, descended the stairs without making one of them creak, and without disturbing one of the sonorous snorings stored from the garret to the cellar; then, having saddled his horse, shut the stable and house doors, he set off, at a foot-pace, on his expedition to Bretagne. He had done quite right not to trouble himself with all the political and diplomatic affairs which solicited his attention; for, in the morning, in the freshness and mild twilight, his ideas developed themselves in purity and abundance. In the first place, he passed before the house of Fouquet, and threw into a large gaping box the fortunate order which, the evening before, he had had so much trouble to recover from the hooked fingers of the intendant. Placed in an envelope, and addressed to Fouquet, it had not even been divined by Planchet, who in divination was equal to Calchas or the Pythian Apollo. D'Artagnan thus sent back the order to Fouquet, without compromising himself, and without having thenceforward any reproaches to make himself. When he had effected this proper restitution, "Now," said he to himself, "let us inhale much material air, much freedom from cares, much health; let us allow the horse Zephyr, whose flanks puff as if he had to respire an atmosphere, breathe; and let us be very ingenious in our little calculations. It is time," said D'Artagnan, "to form a plan of the campaign, and, according to the method of M. Turenne, who has a large head full of all sorts of good counsels, before the plan of the campaign, it is

advisable to draw a striking portrait of the generals to whom we are to be opposed. In the first place, M. Fouquet presents himself. What is M. Fouquet?—M. Fouquet,” replied D’Artagnan to himself, “is a handsome man, very much beloved by the women ; a generous man, very much beloved by the poets ; a man of wit, much execrated by pretenders. We now I am neither woman, poet, nor pretender ; I neither love nor hate monsieur le surintendant. I find myself, therefore, in the same position in which M. de Turenne found himself when opposed to the Prince de Condé at Jargeau, Gien, and the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. He did not execrate monsieur le prince, it is true, but he obeyed the king. Monsieur le prince is an agreeable man, but the king is king. Turenne heaved a deep sigh, called Condé ‘My cousin,’ and swept away his army. Now what does the king wish?—That does not concern me. Now, what does M. Colbert wish?—Oh, that’s another thing. M. Colbert wishes all that M. Fouquet does not wish. Then what does M. Fouquet wish?—Oh, that is serious,—M. Fouquet wishes precisely for all which the king wishes.”

This monologue ended, D’Artagnan began to laugh, whilst making his whip whistle in the air. He was already on the high road, frightening the birds in the hedges, listening to the livres clinking and dancing in his leather pocket, at every step ; and, let us confess it, every time that D’Artagnan found himself in such conditions, tenderness was not his dominant vice. “Come,” said he, “I cannot think the expedition a very dangerous one ; and it will fall out with my voyage as with that piece M. Monk took me to see in London, which was called, I think, *Much Ado about Nothing*.”

## CHAPTER LXVI.

### THE JOURNEY.

IT was perhaps the fiftieth time since the day on which we opened the history, that this man, with a heart of bronze and muscles of steel, had left his house and friends, everything, in short, to go in search of fortune and death. The one—that is to say, death—had constantly retreated before him, as if afraid of him ; the other—that is to say, fortune—for a month past only had really made an alliance with him. Although he was not a great philosopher, after the fashion of either Epicurus or Socrates, he was a powerful spirit, having knowledge of life, and endowed with thought. No one is as brave, as adventurous, or as skilful as D’Artagnan, without being at the same time inclined to be a *dreamer*. He had picked up, here and there, some scraps of M. de la Rochefoucault, worthy of being translated into Latin by MM. de Port Royal ; and he had made a collection *en passant*, in the society of Athos and Aramis, of many morsels of Seneca and Cicero, translated by them, and applied to the uses of common life. That contempt of riches which our Gascon had observed as an article of faith during the thirty-five first years of his life, had for a long time been considered by him as the first article of the code of bravery. “Article first,” said he, “A man is brave because he has nothing. A man has nothing because he despises riches.” Therefore, with these principles, which, as we have said, had regulated the thirty-five first years of his life, D’Artagnan was no sooner possessed of riches, than he felt it necessary to ask himself if, in spite of his riches, he were still brave. To this, for any other but D’Artagnan, the events of the Place de Grève might have served as :

reply. Many consciences would have been satisfied with them, but D'Artagnan was brave enough to ask himself sincerely and conscientiously if he were brave. Therefore to this :—

“But it appears to me that I drew promptly enough, and cut and thrust pretty freely on the Place de Grève, to be satisfied of my bravery,” D'Artagnan had himself replied. “Gently, captain, that is not an answer. I was brave that day, because they were burning my house ; and there are a hundred, and even a thousand, to speak against one, that if those gentlemen of the riots had not formed that unlucky idea, their plan of attack would have succeeded, or, at least, it would not have been I who would have opposed myself to it. Now, what will be brought against me ? I have no house to be burnt in Bretagne ; I have no treasure there that can be taken from me.—No ; but I have my skin ; that precious skin of M. d'Artagnan, which to him is worth more than all the houses and all the treasures of the world. That skin to which I cling above everything, because it is, everything considered, the binding of a body which incloses a heart very warm and ready to fight, and, consequently, to live. Then, I do desire to live ; and, in reality, I live much better, more completely, since I have become rich. Who the devil ever said that money spoiled life ! Upon my soul, it is no such thing ; on the contrary, it seems as if I absorbed a double quantity of air and sun. *Mordieux !* what will it be then, if I double that fortune, and if, instead of the switch I now hold in my hand, I should ever carry the bâton of a maréchal ? Then, I really don't know if there will be, from that moment, enough of air and sun for me. In fact, this is not a dream ; who the devil would oppose it, if the king made me a duke and maréchal, as his father, King Louis XIII., made a duke and constable of Albert de Luynes ? Am I not as brave, and much more intelligent, than that imbecile De Vitry ? Ah ! that's exactly what will prevent my advancement : I have too much wit. Luckily, if there is any justice in this world, fortune owes me many compensations. She owes me, certainly, a recompense for all I did for Anne of Austria, and an indemnification for all she has not done for me. Then at the present, I am very well with a king, and with a king who has the appearance of determining to reign. May God keep him in that illustrious road ! For, if he is resolved to reign, he will want me ; and if he wants me, he will give me what he has promised me—warmth and light ; so that I march, comparatively, now, as I marched formerly—from nothing to everything. Only the nothing of to-day is the all of former days ; there has only this little change taken place in my life. And now let us see ! let us take the part of the heart, as I just now was speaking of it. But, in truth, I only spoke of it from memory.” And the Gascon applied his hand to his breast, as if he were actually seeking the place where his heart was.

“Ah ! wretch !” murmured he, smiling with bitterness. “Ah ! poor mortal species ! You hoped, for an instant, that you had not a heart, and now you find you have one—bad courtier as thou art—and even one of the most seditious. You have a heart which speaks to you in favour of M. Fouquet. And what is M. Fouquet when the king is in question ?—A conspirator, a real conspirator, who did not even give himself the trouble to conceal his being a conspirator ; therefore, what a weapon would you not have against him, if his good grace and his intelligence had not made a scabbard for that weapon. An armed revolt !—for, in fact, M. Fouquet has been guilty of an armed revolt. Thus, while the king vaguely suspects M. Fouquet of rebellion, I know it—I could prove that M. Fouquet had caused the shedding of the blood of his majesty's subjects. Now,

then, let us see ! Knowing all that, and holding my tongue, what further would this heart wish in return for a kind action of M. Fouquet's, for an advance of fifteen thousand livres, for a diamond worth a thousand pistoles, for a smile in which there was as much bitterness as kindness ?—I save his life.

"Now, then, I hope," continued the musketeer, "that this imbecile of a heart is going to preserve silence, and so be fairly quits with M. Fouquet. Now, then, the king becomes my sun, and as my heart is quits with M. Fouquet, let him beware who places himself between me and my sun ! Forward, for his majesty Louis XIV. !—Forward !"

These reflections were the only impediments which were able to retard the progress of D'Artagnan. These reflections once made, he increased the speed of his horse. But, however perfect his horse Zephyr might be, it could not hold out at such a pace for ever. The day after his departure from Paris, he was left at Chartres, at the house of an old friend D'Artagnan had met with in an *hôtelier* of that city. From that moment the musketeer travelled on post-horses. Thanks to this mode of locomotion, he traversed the space which separates Chartres from Châteaubriand. In the last of these two cities, far enough from the coast to prevent any one guessing that D'Artagnan wished to reach the sea—far enough from Paris to prevent all suspicion of his being a messenger from Louis XIV., whom D'Artagnan had called his sun, without suspecting that he who was only at present a rather poor star in the heaven of royalty, would one day make that star his emblem ; the messenger of Louis XIV., we say, quitted the post and purchased a *bidet* of the meanest appearance—one of those animals which an officer of cavalry would never choose, for fear of being disgraced. Excepting the colour, this new acquisition recalled to the mind of D'Artagnan the famous orange-coloured horse with which, or rather upon which, he had made his first appearance in the world. Truth to say, from the moment he crossed this new steed, it was no longer D'Artagnan who was travelling,—it was a good man clothed in an iron-grey *justaucorps*, brown *haut-de-chausses*, holding the medium between a priest and a layman ; that which brought him nearest to the churchman was, that D'Artagnan had placed on his head a *calotte* of threadbare velvet, and over the *calotte*, a large black hat ; no more sword ; a stick, hung by a cord to his wrist ; but to which, he promised himself, as an unexpected auxiliary, to join, upon occasion, a good dagger, ten inches long, concealed under his cloak. The *bidet* purchased at Châteaubriand completed the metamorphosis ; it was called, or rather, D'Artagnan called it, Furet (ferret).

"If I have changed Zephyr into Furet," said D'Artagnan, "I must make some diminutive or other of my own name. So, instead of D'Artagnan, I will be Agnan, short ; that is a concession which I naturally owe to my grey coat, my round hat, and my rusty *calotte*."

Monsieur D'Artagnan travelled, then, pretty easily upon Furet, who ambled like a true butter-woman's pad, and who, with his amble, managed cheerfully about twelve leagues a day, upon four spindle-shanks, of which the practised eye of D'Artagnan had appreciated the strength and safety beneath the thick mass of hair which covered them. Jogging along, the traveller took notes, studied the country, which he traversed reserved and silent, ever seeking the pretext the most plausible to go to Belle-Isle-en-Mer, and to see everything without arousing suspicion. In this manner, he was enabled to convince himself of the importance the event assumed in proportion as he drew near to it. In this remote country, in this ancient

chy of Bretagne, which was not France at that period, and is not even now, the people knew nothing of the king of France. They not only did not know him, but were unwilling to know him. One fact—a single one—floated visibly for them upon the political current. Their ancient dukes no longer governed them ; but it was a void—nothing more. In the place of the sovereign duke, the seigneurs of parishes reigned without control ; and, above these seigneurs, God, who has never been forgotten in Bretagne. Among these suzerains of châteaux and belfries, the most powerful, the most rich, and the most popular, was M. Fouquet, seigneur of Belle-Isle. Even in the country, even within sight of that mysterious isle, legends and traditions consecrate its wonders. Every one did not penetrate into it : the isle, of an extent of six leagues in length, and six in breadth, was a seignorial property, which the people had for a long time respected, covered as it was with the name of Retz, so much redoubted in the country. Shortly after the erection of this seigneurie into a marquisate, Belle-Isle passed to M. Fouquet. The celebrity of the isle did not date from yesterday ; its name, or rather its qualification, is traced back to the remotest antiquity : the ancients called it Kalonèse, from the two Greek words, signifying beautiful isle. Thus, at a distance of eighteen hundred years, it had borne, in another idiom, the same name it still bears. There was, then, something in itself in this property of M. Fouquet's, besides its position of six leagues off the coast of France ; a position which makes it sovereign in its maritime solitude, like a majestic ship which should disdain roads, and would proudly cast its anchors in mid-ocean.

D'Artagnan learnt all this without appearing the least in the world astonished. He also learnt that the best way to get intelligence was to go to La Roche-Bernard, a tolerably important city at the mouth of the Vilaine. Perhaps there he could embark ; if not, crossing the salt marshes, he could repair to Guérande-en-Croisic, to wait for an opportunity to cross over to Belle-Isle. He had discovered, besides, since his departure from Châteaubriand, that nothing would be impossible for Furet under the impulse of M. Agnan, and nothing to M. Agnan upon the initiative of Furet. He prepared, then to sup off a teal and a *tourteau*, in an hotel of La Roche-Bernard, and ordered to be brought from the cellar, to wash down these two Breton dishes, some cider, which, the moment it touched his lips, he perceived to be more Breton still.

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## CHAPTER LXVII.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH A POET WHO HAD TURNED  
PRINTER FOR THE SAKE OF PRINTING HIS OWN VERSES.

BEFORE taking his place at table, D'Artagnan acquired, as was his custom, all the information he could ; but it is an axiom of curiosity, that every man who wishes to question well and fruitfully ought in the first place to lay himself open to questions. D'Artagnan sought, then, with his usual skill, a useful questioner in the hostelry of La Roche-Bernard. At the moment, there were in the house, in the first story, two travellers occupied also in preparations for supper, or with their supper itself. D'Artagnan had seen their nags in the stable, and their equipages in the *salle*. One travelled with a lackey, as a sort of personage ;—two Perche mares, sleek, sound beasts, were their means of locomotion. The other, rather a little fellow, a traveller of meagre appearance, wearing a dusty surtout, dirty linen, boots more worn by the pavement than the stirrup, had come from

Nantes with a cart drawn by a horse so like Furet in colour, that D'Artagnan might have gone a hundred miles without finding a better match. This cart contained divers large packets wrapped up in pieces of old stuff.

"That traveller there," said D'Artagnan to himself, "is the man for my money. He will do, he suits me ; I ought to do for and suit him ; M. Agnan, with the grey doublet and the rusty *calotte*, is not unworthy of supping with the gentleman of the old boots and the old horse." This being said, D'Artagnan called the host, and desired him to send his teal, *tourteau*, and cider up to the chamber of the gentleman of modest exterior. He himself climbed, a plate in his hand, the wooden staircase which led to the chamber, and began to knock at the door.

"Come in !" said the unknown. D'Artagnan entered, with a simper on his lips, his plate under his arm, his hat in one hand, his candle in the other.

"Excuse me, monsieur," said he, "I am, as you are, a traveller ; I know no one in the hotel, and I have the bad habit of losing my spirits when I eat alone ; so that my repast appears a bad one to me, and does not nourish me. Your face, which I saw just now, when you came down to have some oysters opened,—your face pleased me much. Besides, I have observed you have a horse just like mine, and that the host, no doubt on account of that resemblance, has placed them side by side in the stable, where they appear to agree amazingly well together. I therefore, monsieur, cannot see why the masters should be separated when the horses are united. In consequence, I am come to request the pleasure of being admitted to your table. My name is Agnan, at your service, monsieur, the unworthy steward of a rich seigneur, who wishes to purchase some salt-mines in this country, and sends me to examine his future acquisitions. In truth, monsieur, I should be well pleased if my countenance were as agreeable to you as yours is to me ; for, upon my honour, I am quite yours."

The stranger, whom D'Artagnan saw for the first time,—for before he had only caught a glimpse of him—the stranger had black and brilliant eyes, a yellow complexion, a brow a little wrinkled by the weight of fifty years, *bonhomie* in his features collectively, but a little cunning in his look.

"One would say," thought D'Artagnan, "that this merry fellow has never exercised more than the upper part of his head, his eyes, and his brain. He must be a man of science : his mouth, nose, and chin signify absolutely nothing."

"Monsieur," replied the latter, with whose mind and person we have been making so free, "you do me much honour ; not that I am ever *ennuyé*, for I have," added he, smiling, "a company which amuses me always ; but, never mind that, I am very happy to receive you." But when saying this, the man with the worn boots cast an uneasy look at his table, from which the oysters had disappeared, and upon which there was nothing left but a morsel of salt bacon.

"Monsieur," D'Artagnan hastened to say, "the host is bringing me up a pretty piece of roasted poultry and a superb *tourteau*." D'Artagnan had read in the look of his companion, however rapid it had been, the fear of an attack by a parasite : he divined justly. At this opening, the features of the man of modest exterior relaxed ; and, as if he had watched the moment for his entrance, as D'Artagnan spoke, the host appeared, bearing the announced dishes. The *tourteau* and the teal were added to the morsel of broiled bacon : D'Artagnan and his guest bowed, sat down opposite to each other, and, like two brothers, shared the bacon and the other dishes.

"Monsieur," said D'Artagnan, "you must confess that association is a wonderful thing."

"How so?" replied the stranger, with his mouth full.

"Well, I will tell you," replied D'Artagnan.

The stranger gave a short truce to the movement of his jaws, in order to hear the better.

"In the first place," continued D'Artagnan, "instead of one candle, which each of us had, we have two."

"That is true!" said the stranger, struck with the extreme justness of his observation.

"Then I see that you eat my *tourteau* in preference, whilst I, in preference, eat your bacon."

"That is true again."

"And then, in addition to being better lighted and eating what we prefer, I place the pleasure of your company."

"Truly, monsieur, you are very jovial," said the unknown cheerfully.

"Yes, monsieur, jovial, as all people are who carry nothing in their heads. Oh! I can see it is quite another sort of thing with you," continued D'Artagnan; "I can read in your eyes all sorts of genius."

"Oh, monsieur!"

"Come, confess one thing."—"What is that?"

"That you are a learned man."—" *Ma foi!* monsieur."

"*Hein?*"—"Almost."

"Come, then!"—"I am an author."

"There!" cried D'Artagnan, clapping his hands, "I knew I could not be deceived! It is a miracle!"

"Monsieur——"

"What! shall I have the honour of passing the evening in the society of an author, of a celebrated author, perhaps?"

"Oh!" said the unknown, blushing, "celebrated, monsieur, celebrated is not the word."

"Modest!" cried D'Artagnan, transported, "he is modest!" Then, turning towards the stranger, with a character of blunt *bonhomie*: "But tell me at least the name of your works, monsieur; for you will please to observe you have not told me yours, and I have been forced to divine your genius."

"My name is Jupenet, monsieur," said the author.

"A fine name! a fine name! upon my honour; and I do not know why—pardon me the mistake, if it be one—out surely I have heard that name somewhere."

"I have made verses," said the poet modestly.

"Ah! that is it then; I have heard them read."

"A tragedy."

"I must have seen it played."

The poet blushed again, and said: "I do not think that can be the case, for my verses have not been printed."

"Well, then, it must have been the tragedy which informed me of your name."

"You are again mistaken, for MM. the comedians of the Hôtel de Bourgogne would have nothing to do with it," said the poet, with the smile of which certain sorts of pride alone know the secret. D'Artagnan bit his lips. "Thus then you see, monsieur," continued the poet, "you are in error on my account, and that not being at all known to you, you have never heard speak of me."

"And that confounds me. That name, Jupenet, appears to me nevertheless, a fine name, and quite as worthy of being known as those of MM. Corneille, or Rotrou, or Garnier. I hope, monsieur, you will have the goodness to repeat to me a part of your tragedy presently, by way of dessert, for instance. That will be sugared roast meat,—*mordieux*! Ah! pardon me, monsieur, that was a little oath which escaped me, because it is a habit with my lord and master. I sometimes allow myself to use that little oath, as it seems in good taste. I take this liberty only in his absence, please to observe, for you may understand that in his presence—but,—in truth——"

"Monsieur, this cider is abominable! do you not think so? And besides, the pot is of such an irregular shape it will not stand on the table."

"Suppose we were to make it level?"

"To be sure; but with what?"

"With this knife."

"And the teal, with what shall we cut that up? Do you not, by chance, mean to touch the teal?"—"Certainly."

"Well then——"—"Wait." And the poet rummaged in his pocket and drew out a piece of brass, oblong, quadrangular, about a line in thickness, and an inch and a half in length. But scarcely had this little piece of brass seen the light, than the poet appeared to have committed an imprudence, and made a movement to put it back again in his pocket. D'Artagnan perceived this, for he was a man nothing escaped. He stretched forth his hand towards the piece of brass: "Humph! that which you hold in your hand is pretty; will you allow me to look at it?"

"Certainly," said the poet, who appeared to have yielded too soon to a first impulse. "Certainly, you may look at it; but it will be in vain for you to look at it," added he, with a satisfied air; "if I were not to tell you the use of that, you would never guess it."

D'Artagnan had seized as an avowal the hesitation of the poet, and his eagerness to conceal the piece of brass which a first movement had induced him to take out of his pocket. His attention, therefore, once awakened on this point, he surrounded himself with a circumspection which gave him a superiority upon all occasions. Besides, whatever M. Jupenet might say about it, by the simple inspection of the object, he had perfectly known what it was. It was a character in printing.

"Can you guess, now, what this is?" continued the poet.

"No," said D'Artagnan, "no, *ma foi*!"

"Well, monsieur," said M. Jupenet, "this little piece of brass is a printing letter."—"Bah!"

"A capital."

"Stop, stop, stop," said D'Artagnan, opening his eyes very innocently.

"Yes, monsieur, a capital; the first letter of my name."

"And this is a letter, is it?"—"Yes, monsieur."

"Well; I will confess one thing to you."

"And what is that?"

"No, I will not; I was going to say something very stupid."

"No, no," said Master Jupenet, with a patronising air.

"Well, then, I cannot comprehend, if that is a letter, how you can make a word."

"A word?"—"Yes, a printed word."

"Oh, that's very easy."—"Let me see."

"Does it interest you?"—"Enormously."

"Well, I will explain the thing to you. Attend."

"I am attending."

"That is it."—"Good."

"Look attentively."

"I am looking." D'Artagnan, in fact, appeared absorbed in his observations. Jupenet drew from his pocket seven or eight other pieces of brass, all smaller than the first.

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan.

"What?"—"You have, then, a whole printing office in your pocket. *Peste!* that is curious indeed."

"Is it not?"

"Good God! what a number of things we learn by travelling!"

"To your health!" said Jupenet, quite enchanted.

"To yours, *mordoux!* to yours. But—an instant—not in this cider. It is an abominable drink, unworthy of a man who quenches his thirst at the Hippocrene fountain—is not it so you call your fountain, you poets?"

"Yes, monsieur, our fountain is so called. That comes from two Greek words—*hippos*, which means a horse, and——"

"Monsieur," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you shall drink of a liquor which comes from one single French word, and is none the worse for that,—from the word *grape*; this cider gives me the heartburn. Allow me to inquire of your host if there is not a good bottle of Beaugency, or of the Ceran growth, at the back of the large bins of his cellar."

The host, being called, immediately attended.

"Monsieur," interrupted the poet, "take care, we shall not have time to drink the wine, unless we make great haste, for I must take advantage of the tide to secure the boat."

"What boat?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Why, the boat which sets out for Belle-Isle."

"Ah,—for Belle-Isle," said the musketeer, "that is good."

"Bah! you will have plenty of time, monsieur," replied the *hôte*, uncorking the bottle, "the boat will not leave this hour."

"But who will give me notice?" said the poet.

"Your neighbour," replied the host.

"But I scarcely know him."

"When you hear him going, it will be time for you to go."

"Is he going to Belle-Isle, likewise, then?"—"Yes."

"The monsieur who has a lackey?" asked D'Artagnan. "He is some gentleman, no doubt?"

"I know nothing of him."

"How!—know nothing of him?"

"No; all I know is, that he is drinking the same wine as you."

"*Peste!* that is a great honour for us," said D'Artagnan, filling his companion's glass, whilst the host went out.

"So," resumed the poet, returning to his dominant ideas, "you never saw any printing done?"—"Never."

"Well, then, take the letters thus, which compose the word, you see; A B; *ma foi!* here is an R, two E E, then a G." And he assembled the letters with a swiftness and skill which did not escape the eye of D'Artagnan.

"*Abrégé,*" said he, as he ended.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan; "here are plenty of letters got together; but how are they kept so?" And he poured out a second glass for the poet. M. Jupenet smiled like a man who has an answer for everything;

then he pulled out—still from his pocket—a little metal ruler, compose of two parts, like a carpenter's rule, against which he put together, and in a line, the characters, holding them under his left thumb.

"And what do you call that little metal ruler?" said D'Artagnan, "for, suppose, all these things have names."

"This is called a composing-stick," said Jupenet; "it is by the aid of this stick that the lines are formed."

"Come, then, I was not mistaken in what I said; you have a press in your pocket," said D'Artagnan, laughing with an air of simplicity so stupid that the poet was completely his dupe.

"No," replied he; "but I am too lazy to write, and when I have a verse in my head, I print it immediately. That is a labour spared."

"*Mordieux!*" thought D'Artagnan to himself, "this must be cleared up." And under a pretext, which did not embarrass the musketeer, who was fertile in expedients, he left the table, went down stairs, ran to the shed under which stood the poet's little cart, poked the point of his poniard into the stuff which enveloped one of the packages, which he found full of types, like those which the poet had in his pocket.

"Humph!" said D'Artagnan, "I do not yet know whether M. Fouquet wishes to fortify Belle-Isle; but, at all events, here are some spiritual munitions for the castle." Then, rich in his discovery, he ran up stairs again, and resumed his place at the table.

D'Artagnan had learnt what he wished to know. He, however, remained, none the less, face to face with his partner, to the moment when they heard from the next room symptoms of a person's being about to go out. The printer was immediately on foot; he had given orders for his horse to be got ready. His carriage was waiting at the door. The second traveller got into his saddle, in the courtyard, with his lackey. D'Artagnan followed Jupenet to the door; he embarked his cart and horse on board the boat. As to the opulent traveller, he did the same with his two horses and his servant. But all the wit D'Artagnan employed in endeavouring to find out his name was lost—he could learn nothing. Only he took such notice of his countenance, that that countenance was impressed upon his mind for ever. D'Artagnan had a great inclination to embark with the two travellers, but an interest more powerful than curiosity—that of success—repelled him from the shore, and brought him back again to the *hôtellerie*. He entered with a sigh, and went to bed directly, in order to be ready early in the morning with fresh ideas and the counsel of the night.

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## CHAPTER LXVIII.

### D'ARTAGNAN CONTINUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.

AT daybreak, D'Artagnan saddled Furet, who had fared sumptuously all the night, and devoured the remainder of the corn left by her companions. The musketeer sifted all he could out of the host, whom he found cunning, mistrustful, and devoted, body and soul, to M. Fouquet. In order, then, not to awaken the suspicions of this man, he carried on his fable of being a probable purchaser of some salt-mines. To have embarked for Belle-Isle at Roche-Bernard, would have been to expose himself to comments which had, perhaps, been already made, and would be carried to the castle. Moreover, it was singular that this traveller and his lackey should have remained a secret for D'Artagnan, in spite of all the questions

essed by him to the host, who appeared to know him perfectly well. musketeer then made some inquiries concerning the salt-mines, and the road to the marshes, leaving the sea to his right, and penetrating that vast and desolate plain which resembles a sea of mud, of which, and there, a few crests of salt silver the undulations. Furet walked airably, with his little nervous legs, along the foot-wide causeways which separate the salt-mines. D'Artagnan, aware of the consequences of all, which would result in a cold bath, allowed him to go as he liked, contenting himself with looking at, in the horizon, the three rocks, which rose up like lance-blades from the bosom of the plain, destitute of verdure. Piral, the bourgs of Batz and Le Croisic, exactly resembling each other, attracted and suspended his attention. If the traveller turned round, the better to make his observations, he saw on the other side an horizon of the same other steeples, Guérande, La Poulighen, and Saint-Joachim, which, of the same circumference, represented a set of skittles, of which he and Furet were but the wandering ball. Piral was the first little port on his right. He went thither, with the names of the principal salters in his mouth. At the moment he visited the little port of Piral, five large barges, laden with stones, were leaving it. It appeared strange to D'Artagnan that stones should be leaving a country where none are found. He had recourse to all the amenity of M. Agnan to learn from the people of the port the cause of this singularity. An old fisherman replied to M. Agnan, that the stones, very certainly, did not come from Piral or the marshes.

"Where do they come from, then?" asked the musketeer.

"Monsieur, they come from Nantes and Paimbœuf."

"Where are they going, then?"

"Monsieur, to Belle-Isle."

"Ah! ah!" said D'Artagnan, in the same tone he had assumed to tell the printer that his characters interested him; "are they building at Belle-Isle, then?"

"Why, yes, monsieur, M. Fouquet has the walls of the castle repaired every year."

"Is it in ruins, then?"—"It is old."

"Thank you."—"The fact is," said D'Artagnan to himself, "nothing is more natural; every proprietor has a right to repair his property. It would be like telling me I was fortifying the 'Image de Nôtre-Dame,' when I should be purely and simply obliged to make repairs. In good truth, I believe false reports have been made to his majesty, and he is very likely to be in the wrong."

"You must confess," continued he then aloud, and addressing the fisherman—for his part of a suspicious man was imposed upon him by the object even of his mission—"you must confess, my dear monsieur, that these stones travel in a very curious fashion."

"How so?" said the fisherman.

"They come from Nantes or Paimbœuf by the Loire, do they not?"

"That descends."

"That is convenient,—I don't say it is not; but why do they not go straight from Saint-Nazaire to Belle-Isle?"

"Eh! because the *chalands* (barges) are bad boats, and keep the sea badly," replied the fisherman.

"That is not a reason."

"Pardon me, monsieur, one may see that you have never been a sailor," added the fisherman, not without a sort of disdain.

"Explain that to me, if you please, my good man. It appears to me

that to come from Paimbœuf to Pirial, and go from Pirial to Belle-Isle, as if we went from Roche-Bernard to Nantes, and from Nantes to Pirial.

"By water that would be the nearest way," replied the fisherman, impatiently.

"But there is an elbow?" The fisherman shook his head.

"The shortest road from one place to another is the straight line," continued D'Artagnan.

"You forget the tide, monsieur."—"Well! take the tide."

"And the wind."—"Well, and the wind."

"Without doubt; the current of the Loire carries barques almost as fast as Croisic. If they want to lie by a little, or to refresh the crew, they come to Pirial along the coast; from Pirial they find another inverse current, which carries them to the Isle-Dumel, two leagues and a half."

"Granted."

"There the current of the Vilaine throws them upon another isle, the isle of Hoedic?"—"I agree to that."

"Well, monsieur, from that isle to Belle-Isle the way is quite straight. The sea, broken both above and below, passes like a canal—like a mirror between the two isles; the *chalands* glide along upon it like ducks upon the Loire; that is it."

"It does not signify," said the obstinate M. Agnan; "it is very far about."

"Ah! yes; but M. Fouquet will have it so," replied, as conclusive, the fisherman, taking off his woollen cap at the enunciation of that respected name.

A look from D'Artagnan, a look as keen and piercing as a sword-blade, found nothing in the heart of the old man but simple confidence, on his features nothing but satisfaction and indifference. He said, "M. Fouquet will have it so," as he would have said, "God has willed it."

D'Artagnan had already advanced too far in this direction; besides, the *chalands* being gone, there remained nothing at Pirial but a single barque—that of the old man—and it did not look fit for sea without great preparation. D'Artagnan therefore aroused Furet, who, as a new proof of his charming character, resumed his march with his feet in the salt-mines, and his nose to the dry wind, which bends the furze and the broom of this country. He reached Croisic about five o'clock.

If D'Artagnan had been a poet, it was a beautiful spectacle that of the immense strand of a league or more, which the sea covers at high tides, and which at the reflux appears grey, desolate, spread over with poly-puses and seaweed, with its pebbles dispersed and white, like the bones in some vast old cemetery. But the soldier, the politician, and the ambitious man had no longer the sweet consolation of looking towards heaven, to read there a hope or a warning. A red sky signifies nothing to such people but wind and disturbance. White and fleecy clouds upon the azure only say that the sea will be smooth and peaceful. D'Artagnan found the sky blue, the breeze embalmed with saline perfumes, and he said, "I will embark with the first tide, if it be but in a nutshell."

At Croisic, as at Pirial, he had remarked enormous heaps of stone lying along the shore. These gigantic walls, demolished every tide by the transport operated upon them for Belle-Isle, were, in the eyes of the musketeer, the consequence and the proof of what he had well divined at Pirial. Was it a wall that M. Fouquet was constructing?—was it a fortification he was erecting? To ascertain that, he must see it. D'Artagnan put Furet into a stable, supped, went to bed, and on the morrow took a walk upon the

or rather upon the shingle. Le Croisic has a port of fifty feet ; it a look-out which resembles an enormous *brioche* (a kind of cake) elevated on a dish. The flat strand is the dish. Hundreds of barrowsful of shingle, solidified with the pebbles, and rounded into cones, with sinuous passages between, are look-outs and *brîoches* at the same time. It is so old, it was so two hundred years ago, only the *brioche* was less large, and probably there were not to be seen trellises of lath around the *brioche*, which constitute the ornament of it, and which the edility of that poor and idle bourgeoisie has planted like *gardes-fous* along the passages, winding round the little terrace. Upon the shingle were three or four fishermen fishing about sardines and shrimps. D'Artagnan, with his eye animated with rough gaiety, and a smile upon his lips, approached these fishermen.

"Any fishing going on to-day?" said he.

"Yes, monsieur," replied one of them ; "we are only waiting for the ebb."

"Where do you fish, my friends?"

"Upon the coasts, monsieur."

"Which are the best coasts?"

"Ah, that is according. The tour of the isles, for example."

"Yes ; but they are a long way off, those isles, are they not?"

"Not very ; four leagues."

"Four leagues ! That is a voyage."

The fishermen laughed out in M. Agnan's face.

"Hear me, then," said the latter, with an air of simple stupidity ; "four leagues off you lose sight of land, do you not?"

"Why ? Not always."

"Ah, it is a long way—too long, or else I would have asked you to take me aboard, and to show me what I have never seen."

"What is that?"—"A live sea-fish."

"Monsieur comes from the province?" said a fisherman.

"Yes, I come from Paris."

The Breton shrugged his shoulders ; then, "Have you ever seen M. Duquet in Paris?" asked he.

"Often," replied D'Artagnan.

"Often !" repeated the fishermen, closing their circle round the Parisian.

Do you know him?"

"A little ; he is the intimate friend of my master."

"Ah !" said the fishermen, in astonishment.

"And," said D'Artagnan, "I have seen all his châteaux of Saint-Mandé, of Vaux, and his hotel in Paris."

"Is that a fine place?"—"Superb."

"It is not so fine a place as Belle-Isle," said the fisherman.

"Bah !" cried M. D'Artagnan, breaking into a laugh so loud that he endangered all his auditors.

"It is very plain you have never seen Belle-Isle," said the most curious of the fishermen. "Do you know that there are six leagues of it, and that there are such trees on it as cannot be equalled even at Nantes-sur-le-Fossé?"

"Trees in the sea !" cried D'Artagnan. "Well, I should like to see them."

"That can be easily done. We are fishing at the Isle de Hoedic—come with us. From that place you will see, as a Paradise, the black trees of Belle-Isle against the sky ; you will see the white line of the castle, which cuts the horizon of the sea like a blade."

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "that must be very beautiful. But do you know there are a hundred belfries at M. Fouquet's château of Vaux?"

The Breton raised his head in profound admiration, but he was not convinced. "A hundred belfries! Ah, that may be; but Belle-Isle is finer than that. Should you like to see Belle-Isle?"

"Is that possible?" asked D'Artagnan.

"Yes, with the permission of the governor."

"But I do not know the governor."

"As you know M. Fouquet, you can tell your name."

"Oh, my friends, I am not a gentleman."

"Everybody enters Belle-Isle," continued the fisherman, in his strong pure language, "provided he means no harm to Belle-Isle or its master."

A slight shudder crept over the body of the musketeer. "That is true," thought he; then recovering himself, "If I were sure," said he, "not to sea-sick."

"What! upon her?" said the fisherman, pointing with pride to his pretty round-bottomed barque.

"Well, you almost persuade me," cried M. Agnan; "I will go and see Belle-Isle, but they will not admit me."

"We shall enter, safe enough."

"You! What for?"

"Why, *dame*! to sell fish to the corsairs."

"He! Corsairs—what do you mean?"

"Well, I mean that M. Fouquet is having two corsairs built to challenge the Dutch and the English, and we sell our fish to the crews of those little vessels."

"Come, come!" said D'Artagnan to himself—"better and better. printing-press, bastions, and corsairs! Well, M. Fouquet is not an enemy to be despised, as I presumed to fancy. He is worth the trouble of travelling to see him nearer."

"We set out at half-past five," said the fisherman, gravely.

"I am quite ready, and I will not leave you now." So D'Artagnan saw the fishermen haul their barques to meet the tide with a windlass. The sea rose; M. Agnan allowed himself to be hoisted on board, not without sporting a little fear and awkwardness, to the amusement of the young sea-urchins who watched him with their large intelligent eyes. He lay himself down upon a folded sail, did not interfere with anything while the barque prepared for sea; and, with its large square sail, it was fair out within two hours. The fishermen, who prosecuted their occupation as they proceeded, did not perceive that their passenger had not become pale; had neither groaned nor suffered; that, in spite of the horrible tossing and rolling of the barque, to which no hand imparted direction, the novice passenger had preserved his presence of mind and his appetite. They fished and their fishing was sufficiently fortunate. To lines baited with prawns soles came, with numerous gambols, to bite. Two nets had already been broken by the immense weight of congers and haddocks; three sea-eels ploughed the hold with their slimy folds and their dying contortions. D'Artagnan brought them good luck; they told him so. The soldier found the occupation so pleasant, that he put his hand to the work—that is to say, to the lines—and uttered roars of joy, and *mordious* enough to have astonished musketeers themselves, every time that a shock given to his line by a captured prey required the play of the muscles of his arm and the employment of his skill and strength. The party of pleasure had made him forget his diplomatic mission. He was struggling with

awfully large conger, and holding fast with one hand to the side of the sel in order to seize with the other the gaping jowl of his antagonist, when the patron said to him, "Take care they don't see you from Belle-Isle!"

These words produced the same effect upon D'Artagnan as the hissing the first bullets on a day of battle: he left go of both line and conger, which, one dragging the other, returned again to the water. D'Artagnan received, within half a league at most, the blue and marked profile of the rocks of Belle-Isle, dominated by the white majestic line of the castle. In the distance, the land with its forests and verdant plains; cattle on the grass. This was what first attracted the attention of the musketeer. The sun darted its rays of gold upon the sea, raising a shining mist or dust around this enchanted isle. Nothing could be seen of it, owing to this dazzling light, but the flattened points; every shadow was strongly marked, and cut with a band of darkness the luminous sheet of the fields and the walls. "Eh! eh!" said D'Artagnan, at the aspect of those masses of black rocks, "these are fortifications which do not stand in need of any engineer to render a landing difficult. Which the devil may could a landing be effected on that isle which God has defended so completely?"

"This way," replied the patron of the barque, changing the sail, and impressing upon the rudder a twist which turned the boat in the direction of a pretty little port, quite coquettish, quite round, and quite newly battle-named.

"What the devil do I see yonder?" said D'Artagnan.—"You see Leomaria," replied the fisherman.

"Well, but there?"—"That is Bragos."

"And further on?"—"Sanger, and then the palace."

"*Mordieux!* It is a world. Ah! there are some soldiers."

"There are seventeen hundred men in Belle-Isle, monsieur," replied the fisherman proudly. "Do you know that the least garrison is of twenty companies of infantry?"

"*Mordieux!*" cried D'Artagnan, stamping with his foot. "His majesty was right enough." They landed.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

IN WHICH THE READER, NO DOUBT, WILL BE AS ASTONISHED AS D'ARTAGNAN WAS TO MEET WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THERE is always something in a landing, if it be only from the smallest sea-boat—a trouble and a confusion which do not leave to the mind the liberty of which it stands in need in order to study at the first glance the new place that is presented to it. The moveable bridges, the agitated sailors, the noise of the water upon the pebbles, the cries and the importunities of those who wait on the shore, are the multiplied details of that sensation which is summed up in one single result—hesitation. It was not, then, till after standing several minutes on the shore that D'Artagnan saw upon the port, but more particularly in the interior of the isle, an immense number of workmen in motion. At his feet, D'Artagnan recognised the five chalands laden with rough stone which he had seen leave the port of Pirial. The stones were transported to the shore by means of a chain formed by twenty-five or thirty peasants. The large stones were loaded upon carriages which conveyed them in the same direction as the shards,

that is to say, towards the works, of which D'Artagnan could as yet appreciate neither the strength nor the extent. Everywhere was to be seen an activity equal to that which Telemachus observed on his landing at Salentum. D'Artagnan felt a strong inclination to penetrate into the interior ; but he could not, under the penalty of exciting mistrust, exhibit too much curiosity. He advanced then only by little and little, scarcely going beyond the line formed by the fishermen on the beach, observing everything, saying nothing, and meeting all suspicions that might have been excited with a half-silly question or a polite bow. And yet, while his companions carried on their trade, giving or selling their fish to the workmen or the inhabitants of the city, D'Artagnan had gained ground by degrees, and, reassured by the little attention paid to him, he began to cast an intelligent and confident look upon the men and things that appeared before his eyes. And his very first glance fell upon movements of earth in which the eye of a soldier could not be mistaken. At the two extremities of the port, in order that the fires should cross upon the great axis of the ellipsis formed by the basin, in the first place, two batteries had been raised, evidently destined to receive flank pieces, for D'Artagnan saw the workmen finishing the platforms and making ready the demi-circumference in wood upon which the wheels of the pieces might turn to embrace every direction over the epaulment. By the side of each of these batteries other workmen were strengthening gabions filled with earth, the lining of another battery. The latter had embrasures, and a conductor of the works called successively men who, with cords, tied the *saucissons*, and those who cut the lozenges and right angles of turf destined to retain the matting of the embrasures. By the activity displayed in these works, already so far advanced, they might be considered as terminated ; they were not yet furnished with their cannons, but the platforms had their *gîtes* and their *madriers* all prepared for the earth, beaten carefully, had consolidated them ; and, supposing the artillery to be on the island, in less than two or three days the port might be completely armed. That which astonished D'Artagnan, when he turned his eyes from the coast batteries to the fortifications of the city, was to see that Belle-Isle was defended by an entirely new system, of which he had often heard the Comte de la Fère speak as a great advancement, but of which he had never yet seen the application. These fortifications belonged neither to the Dutch method of Marollais, nor to the French method of the Chevalier Antoine de Ville, but to the system of Manesson Mallet, a skilful engineer, who, for about six or eight years, had quitted the service of Portugal to enter that of France. These works had the peculiarity, that instead of rising above the earth as did the ancient ramparts destined to defend a city from escalades, they, on the contrary, sunk into it ; and what created the height of the walls was the depth of the ditches. It did not take long to make D'Artagnan perceive the superiority of such a system, which gives no advantage to cannon. Besides, as the *fossés* were lower than, or on a level with, the sea, these *fossés* might be inundated by subterranean sluices. Otherwise, the works were almost complete, and a group of workmen, receiving orders from a man who appeared to be conductor of the works, were occupied in placing the last stones. A bridge of planks, thrown over the *fossé* for the greater convenience of the manoeuvres connected with the barrows, joined the interior to the exterior. With an air of simple curiosity, D'Artagnan asked if he might be permitted to cross the bridge, and he was told that no order prevented it. Consequently he crossed the bridge, and advanced towards the group.

This group was superintended by the man whom D'Artagnan had already marked, and who appeared to be the engineer-in-chief. A plan was laid open before him upon a large stone forming a table, and at some distance from him a crane was in action. This engineer, who by his evident importance first attracted the attention of D'Artagnan, wore a *justaucorps*, which, from its sumptuousness, was scarcely in harmony with the work he was employed in, which would rather have necessitated the costume of a master mason than of a noble. He was, besides, a man of high stature and large square shoulders, wearing a hat covered with feathers. He gestaculated in the most majestic manner, and appeared—for D'Artagnan only saw his back—to be scolding the workmen for their idleness and want of strength.

D'Artagnan continued to draw nearer. At that moment the man with the feathers had ceased to gesticulate, and, with his hands placed upon his knees, was following, half-bent, the efforts of six workmen to raise a block of hewn stone to the top of a piece of timber destined to support that one, so that the cord of the crane might be passed under it. The six men, all on one side of the stone, united their efforts to raise it eight or ten inches from the ground, sweating and blowing, whilst a seventh got ready against there should be daylight enough beneath it to slide in the roller that was to support it. But the stone had already twice escaped from their hands before gaining a sufficient height for the roller to be introduced. There can be no doubt that every time the stone escaped them, they bounded quickly backwards, to keep their feet from being crushed by the refalling stone. Every time, the stone, abandoned by them, sunk deeper into the damp earth, which rendered the operation more and more difficult. A third effort was followed by no better success, but with progressive discouragement. And yet, when the six men were bent towards the stone, the man with the feathers had himself, with a powerful voice, given the word of command, *FIRM*, which presides over all manoeuvres of strength. Then he drew himself up.

"Oh! oh!" said he, "what is all this about? Have I to do with men of straw? *Corne de bœuf!* stand on one side, and you shall see how this is to be done."

"*Peste!*" said D'Artagnan, "will he pretend to raise that rock? that would be a sight worth looking at."

The workmen, as commanded by the engineer, drew back, with their hands down and shaking their heads, with the exception of the one who held the plank, who prepared to perform his office. The man with the feathers went up to the stone, stooped, slipped his hands under the face of the stone, stiffened his Herculean muscles, and, without a moment's delay, with a slow motion, like that of a machine, he lifted the end of the rock a foot from the ground. The workman who held the plank profited by the space thus given him, and slipped the roller under the stone.

"That's the way," said the giant, not letting the rock fall again, but placing it upon its support.

"*Mordioux!*" cried D'Artagnan, "I know but one man capable of such a feat of strength."

"*Hein!*" cried the colossus, turning round.

"Porthos!" murmured D'Artagnan, seized with stupor; "Porthos at Belle-Isle!"

On his part, the man with the feathers fixed his eyes upon the disguised lieutenant, and, in spite of his metamorphosis, recognised him. "D'Ar-

tagnan !" cried he ; and the colour mounted to his face. " Hush !" said to D'Artagnan.

" Hush !" in his turn, said the musketeer. In fact, if Porthos had been discovered by D'Artagnan, D'Artagnan had just been discovered by Porthos. The interest of the particular secret of each struck them both at the same time. Nevertheless, the first movement of the two men was to throw their arms round each other. What they wished to conceal from the bystanders, was not their friendship, but their names. But, after the embrace, came the reflection.

" What the devil brings Porthos to Belle-Isle lifting stones ?" said D'Artagnan ; only D'Artagnan uttered that question in a low voice. Less strict in diplomacy than his friend, Porthos thought aloud.

" How the devil did you come to Belle-Isle ?" asked he of D'Artagnan. " and what do you come to do here ?" It was necessary to reply without hesitation. To hesitate in his answer to Porthos would have been a check, for which the self-love of D'Artagnan would never have consoled himself.

" *Pardieu !* my friend ; I am at Belle-Isle, because you are here."

" Ah, bah !" said Porthos, visibly stupefied with the argument, and seeking to account for it to himself, with that lucidity of deduction which is known to be peculiar to him.

" Without doubt," continued D'Artagnan, unwilling to give his friend time to recollect himself, " I have been to see you at Pierrefonds."

" Indeed !"—" Yes."

" And you did not find me there ?"—" No ; but I found Mouston."

" Is he well ?"—" *Peste !*"

" Well, but Mouston did not tell you I was here."

" Why should he not ? Have I, perchance, deserved to lose his confidence ?"

" No ; but he did not know it."

" Well ; that is a reason at least not offensive to my self-love."

" Then, how did you manage to find me ?"

" My dear friend, a great noble, like you, always leaves traces behind him on his passage ; and I should think but poorly of myself, if I were not sharp enough to follow the traces of my friends." This explanation, flattering as it was, did not entirely satisfy Porthos.

" But I left no traces behind me, as I came here disguised," said Porthos.

" Ah ! You came disguised, did you ?" said D'Artagnan.—" Yes."

" And how ?"—" As a miller."

" And do you think a great noble like you, Porthos, can affect common manners so as to deceive people ?"

" Well, I swear to you, my friend, that I played my part so well that everybody was deceived."

" Indeed ; so well, that I have not discovered and joined you ?"

" Yes ; but how have you discovered and joined me ?"

" Stop a bit. I was going to tell you how. Do you imagine Mouston—?"

" Ah ! it was that fellow, Mouston," said Porthos, gathering together those two triumphant arches which served him for eyebrows.

" But stop I tell you ;—it was no fault of Mouston's, because he was ignorant of where you were."

" I know he was ; and that is why I am in such haste to understand—"

" Oh ! how impatient you are, Porthos !"

"When I do not comprehend, I am terrible."

"Well, you will understand. Aramis wrote to you at Pierrefonds, did he not?"

"Yes."—"And he told you to come before the equinox."

"That is true."—"Well! that is it;" said D'Artagnan, hoping that his reason would satisfy Porthos. Porthos appeared to give himself up to a violent mental labour.

"Yes, yes," said he, "I understand. As Aramis told me to come before the equinox, you have understood that that was to join him. You then inquired where Aramis was, saying to yourself, 'Where Aramis is, there Porthos will be.' You have learnt that Aramis was in Bretagne, and you said to yourself, 'Porthos is in Bretagne.'"

"Exactly! In good truth, Porthos, I cannot tell why you have not earned conjuror. So you understand that, arriving at Roche-Bernard, I heard of the splendid fortifications going on at Belle-Isle. The account raised my curiosity. I embarked in a fishing-boat, without dreaming that you were here: I came, and I saw a fine fellow lifting a stone which Ajax could not have stirred. I cried out, 'Nobody but the Baron de Bracieux could have performed such a feat of strength.' You heard me, you turned round, you recognized me, we embraced; and, *ma foi!* if you like, my dear friend, we will embrace again."

"Ah! now it is all explained," said Porthos; and he embraced D'Artagnan with so much friendship as to deprive the musketeer of his breath for five minutes.

"Why you are stronger than ever," said D'Artagnan, "and still in your arms." Porthos saluted D'Artagnan with a gracious smile. During the few minutes D'Artagnan was recovering his breath, he reflected that he had a very difficult part to play. It was necessary that he should question without ever replying. By the time his respiration returned, he had fixed his plan of the campaign.

## CHAPTER LXX.

WHEREIN THE IDEAS OF D'ARTAGNAN, AT FIRST VERY TROUBLED, BEGIN TO CLEAR UP A LITTLE.

D'ARTAGNAN immediately took the offensive. "Now that I have told you, dear friend, or rather now you have guessed all, tell me what you are doing here, covered with dust and mud?"

Porthos wiped his brow, and looked around him with pride. "Why, it appears," said he, "that you may see what I am doing here."

"No doubt, no doubt; you lift great stones."

"Oh! to show these idle fellows what a man is," said Porthos, with contempt. "But you understand——"

"Yes, that it is not your place to lift stones, although there are many whose place it is, who cannot lift them as you do. It was that which made me ask you, just now, what are you doing here, baron?"

"I am studying topography, chevalier."

"You are studying topography?"

"Yes; but you—what are you doing in that common dress?"

D'Artagnan perceived he had committed a fault in giving expression to his astonishment. Porthos had taken advantage of it, to retort with a question. "Why," said he, "you know I am a bourgeois, in fact; my dress, then, has nothing astonishing in it, since it conforms with my condition."

"Nonsense ! you are a musketeer."

"You are wrong, my friend ; I have given in my resignation."

"Bah !"——"Oh, mon Dieu ! yes."

"And have you abandoned the service ?"——"I have quitted it."

"You have abandoned the king ?"——"Quite."

Porthos raised his arms towards heaven, like a man who has heard extraordinary news. "Well, that does confound me," said he.

"It is nevertheless true."

"And what led you to form such a resolution ?"

"The king displeased me Mazarin had disgusted me for a long time, you know ; so I threw my cassock to the nettles."

"But Mazarin is dead."

"I know that well enough, *parbleu* ! Only at the period of his death my resignation had been given in and accepted two months. Then, feeling myself free, I set off for Pierrefonds, to see my friend Porthos. I had heard talk of the happy division you had made of your time, and I wished for fortnight, to divide mine after your fashion."

"My friend, you know that it is not for a fortnight the house is open to you ; it is for a year—for ten years—for life."

"Thank you, Porthos."

"Ah ! but perhaps you want money—do you ?" said Porthos, making something like fifty louis chink in his pocket. "In that case, you know——"

"No, thank you ; I am not in want of anything. I placed my savings with Planchet, who pays me the interest of them."

"Your savings ?"

"Yes, to be sure," said D'Artagnan ; "why should I not put by savings as well as another, Porthos ?"

"Oh, there is no reason why ; on the contrary, I always suspected you—that is to say, Aramis always suspected you to have savings. For my own part, d'ye see, I take no concern about the management of my household ; but I presume the savings of a musketeer must be small."

"No doubt, relative to yourself, Porthos, who are a millionaire ; but you shall judge. I had laid by twenty-five thousand livres."

"That's pretty well," said Porthos, with an affable air.

"And," continued D'Artagnan, "on the twenty-eighth of last month added to it two hundred thousand livres more."

Porthos opened his large eyes, which eloquently demanded of the musketeer, Where the devil did you steal such a sum as that, my dear friend ?

"Two hundred thousand livres !" cried he at length.

"Yes ; which with the twenty-five I had, and twenty thousand more, have about me, complete the sum of two hundred and forty-five thousand livres."

"But tell me, whence comes this fortune ?"

"I will tell you all about it presently, dear friend ; but as you have been in the first place, many things to tell me yourself, let us place my recital in its proper rank."

"Bravo !" said Porthos ; "then we are both rich. But what can I have to relate to you ?"

"You have to relate to me how Aramis came to be named——"

"Ah ! bishop of Vannes."

"That's it," said D'Artagnan, "bishop of Vannes. Dear Aramis ! do you know how he succeeded so well ?"

"Yes, yes ; without reckoning that he does not mean to stop there,"

What ! do you mean he will not be contented with violet stockings, that he wants a red hat ?”

Hush ! that is promised him.”

Bah ! by the king ?”

By somebody more powerful than the king.”

Ah ; the devil ! Porthos, what incredible things you tell me, my friend !”

“Why incredible ? Is there not always somebody in France more powerful than the king ?”

“Oh yes ; in the time of King Louis XIII. it was Cardinal Richelieu ; the time of the regency it was Cardinal Mazarin. In the time of Louis XIV. it is M.——”

“Go on.”——“It is M. Fouquet.”

“Jove ! you have hit it the first time.”

“So, then, I suppose it is M. Fouquet who has promised Aramis the red hat ?”

Porthos assumed an air of reserve. “Dear friend,” said he, “God preserve me from meddling with the affairs of others, above all from revealing secrets it may be to their interests to be kept. When you see Aramis, he will tell you all he thinks he ought to tell you.”

“You are right, Porthos ; and you are quite a padlock for safety. But, revert to yourself ?”——“Yes,” said Porthos.

“You said just now you came hither to study topography ?”

“I did so.”

“*Tu Dieu !* my friend, what fine things you will do !”

“How do you mean ?”

“Why, these fortifications are admirable.”

“Is that your opinion ?”

“Doubtless it is. In truth, to anything but a regular siege, Belle-Isle is impregnable.”

Porthos rubbed his hands. “That is my opinion,” said he.

“But who the devil has fortified this paltry little place in this manner ?” Porthos drew himself up proudly : “Did not I tell you who ?”

“No.”——“Do you not suspect ?”

“No ; all that I can say is that he is a man who has studied all the systems, and who appears to me to have stopped at the best.”

“Hush !” said Porthos ; “consider my modesty, my dear D’Artagnan !”

“In truth,” replied the musketeer, “can it be you—who——oh !”

“Pray——my dear friend——”

“You who have imagined, traced, and combined between these bastions, these redans, these curtains, these halfmoons ; and are preparing that covered way ?”

“I beg you——”

“You who have built that lunette with its retiring angles and its salient angles.”

“My friend——”

“You who have given that inclination to the openings of your embrasures, by the means of which you so effectively protect the men who serve the guns ?”

“Eh ! *mon Dieu !* yes.”

“Oh ! Porthos, Porthos ! I must bow down before you—I must admire you ! But you have always concealed from us this superior genius. I hope, my dear friend, you will show me all this in detail ?”

“Nothing more easy. There is my plan.”

"Show it me." Porthos led D'Artagnan towards the stone which serve him for a table, and upon which the plan was spread. At the foot of the plan was written, in the formidable writing of Porthos, writing of which we have already had occasion to speak :—

"Instead of making use of the square or rectangle, as has been done to this time, you will suppose your place inclosed in a regular hexagon this polygon having the advantage of offering more angles than the quadrilateral one. Every side of your hexagon, of which you will determine the length in proportion to the dimensions taken upon the place, will be divided into two parts, and upon the middle point you will elevate a perpendicular towards the centre of the polygon, which will equal in length the sixth part of the side. By the extremities of each side of the polygon, you will trace two diagonals, which will cut the perpendicular. These two rights will form the lines of the defence."

"The devil !" said D'Artagnan, stopping at this point of the demonstration ; "why, this is a complete system, Porthos."

"Entirely," said Porthos. "Will you continue?"

"No ; I have read enough of it ; but since it is you, my dear Porthos who direct the works, what need have you of setting down your system so formally in writing?"

"Oh ! my dear friend, death !"

"How ! death?"

"Why, we are all mortal, are we not?"

"That is true," said D'Artagnan, "you have a reply for everything, my friend." And he replaced the plan upon the stone.

But however short a time he had the plan in his hands, D'Artagnan had been able to distinguish under the enormous writing of Porthos, a much more delicate hand, which reminded him of certain letters to Marius Michon, with which he had been acquainted in his youth. Only the India-rubber had passed and repassed so often over this writing, that it might have escaped a less practised eye than that of our musketeer.

"Bravo ! my friend, bravo !" said D'Artagnan.

"And now you know all that you want to know, do you not?" said Porthos, wheeling about.

"*Mordieux !* yes, only do me one last favour, dear friend !"

"Speak, I am master here."

"Do me the pleasure to tell me the name of that gentleman who is walking yonder."

"Where, there?"—"Behind the soldiers."

"Followed by a lackey?"—"Exactly."

"In company with a mean sort of fellow dressed in black?"

"Yes, I mean him."

"That is M. Gétard?"—"And who is Gétard, my friend?"

"He is the architect of the house."—"Of what house?"

"Of M. Fouquet's house."—"Ah ! ah !" cried D'Artagnan ; "you are of the household of M. Fouquet, then, Porthos?"

"I ! what do you mean by that?" said the topographer, blushing to the tips of his ears.

"Why, you say the house, when speaking of Belle-Isle, as if you were speaking of the château of Pierrefonds."

Porthos bit his lips. "Belle-Isle, my friend," said he, "belongs to M. Fouquet, does it not?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"As Pierrefonds belongs to me."

"I told you I believed so ; there are not two words to that."

"Did you ever see a man there who is accustomed to walk about with a sword in his hand ?"

"No ; but I might have seen him there, if he really walked there."

"Well, that gentleman is M. Boulingrin."

"Who is M. Boulingrin ?"

"Now we come to it. If, when this gentleman is walking with a ruler in his hand, any one should ask me,—'Who is M. Boulingrin?' I should reply : 'He is the architect of the house.' Well ! M. Gétard is the printer of M. Fouquet. But he has nothing to do with the fortifications, which are my department alone, do you understand ? mine, absolutely mine."

"Ah ! Porthos," cried D'Artagnan, letting his arms fall as a conquered hero gives up his sword ; "ah ! my friend, you are not only a Herculean topographer, you are, still further, a dialectician of the first water."

"Is it not powerfully reasoned ?" said Porthos ; and he puffed and blew out the conger which D'Artagnan had let slip from his hand.

"And now," said D'Artagnan, "that shabby-looking man who accompanies M. Gétard, is he also of the household of M. Fouquet ?"

"Oh ! yes," said Porthos, with contempt ; "it is one M. Jupenet, or Jupenet, a sort of poet."

"Who is come to establish himself here ?"

"I believe so."

"I thought M. Fouquet had poets enough, yonder—Scudery, Loret, Pellisson, La Fontaine ? If I must tell you the truth, Porthos, that poet disgraces you."

"Eh !—my friend ; but what saves us is that he is not here as a poet."

"As what then is he ?"

"As printer. And you make me remember, I have a word to say to the minister."

"Say it, then."

Porthos made a sign to Jupenet, who perfectly recollected D'Artagnan, and did not care to come nearer ; which naturally produced another sign from Porthos. This was so imperative, he was obliged to obey. As he approached, "Come hither !" said Porthos. "You only landed yesterday, and you have begun your tricks already."

"How so, monsieur le baron ?" asked Jupenet, trembling.

"Your press was groaning all night, monsieur," said Porthos, "and you prevented my sleeping, *corne de bœuf* !"

"Monsieur——" objected Jupenet, timidly.

"You have nothing yet to print ; therefore, you have no occasion to set your press going. What did you print last night ?"

"Monsieur, a light poem of my own composition."

"Light ! no, no, monsieur ; the press groaned pitifully with it. Let that not happen again. Do you understand ?"—"No, monsieur."

"You promise me ?"—"I do, monsieur."

"Very well : this time I pardon you. Adieu !"

"Well, now we have combed that fellow's head, let us breakfast."

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "let us breakfast."

"Only," said Porthos, "I beg you to observe, my friend, that we have only two hours for our repast."

"What would you have ? We will try to make enough of it. But why have you only two hours ?"

"Because it is high tide at one o'clock, and, with the tide, I am going to

Vannes. But, as I shall return to-morrow, my dear friend, you can stay here; you shall be master; I have a good cook and a good cellar."

"No," interrupted D'Artagnan, "better than that."—"What?"

"You are going to Vannes, you say?"—"To a certainty."

"To see Aramis?"—"Yes."

"Well! I came from Paris on purpose to see Aramis."

"That's true."

"I will go with you then."—"Do; that's the thing."

"Only, I ought to have seen Aramis first, and you after. But madame proposes, and God disposes. I have begun with you, and will finish with Aramis."—"Very well."

"And in how many hours can you go from hence to Vannes?"

"Oh! *pardieu!* in six hours. Three hours by sea to Sarzeau, three hours by road from Sarzeau to Vannes."

"How convenient that is! Being so near to the bishopric; do you often go to Vannes?"

"Yes; once a week. But, stop till I get my plan."

Porthos picked up his plan, folded it carefully, and engulfed it in his large pocket.

"Good!" said D'Artagnan aside; "I think I now know the true engineer who is fortifying Belle-Isle."

Two hours after, at high tide, Porthos and D'Artagnan set out for Sarzeau.

## CHAPTER LXXI.

### A PROCESSION AT VANNES.

THE passage from Belle-Isle to Sarzeau was made rapidly enough, thanks to one of those little corsairs of which D'Artagnan had been told during his voyage, and which, shaped for fast sailing and destined for the chase, were sheltered at that time in the road of Loc-Maria, where one of them, with a quarter of its war-crew, performed the duty between Belle-Isle and the continent. D'Artagnan had an opportunity of convincing himself that Porthos, though engineer and topographer, was not deeply versed in affairs of State. His perfect ignorance, with any other, might have passed for well-informed dissimulation. But D'Artagnan knew too well all the folds and the refolds of his Porthos not to find a secret if there were one there. Like those regular, minute old bachelors, who know how to find, with their eyes shut, each book on the shelves of their library, and each piece of linen in their wardrobe. Then, if he had found nothing, that cunning D'Artagnan, in rolling and unrolling his Porthos, it was because, in truth, there was nothing to be found.

"Be it so," said D'Artagnan; "I shall know more at Vannes in half an hour than Porthos has known at Belle-Isle in two months. Only, in order that I may know something, it is important that Porthos does not make use of the only stratagem I leave at his disposal: he must not warn Aramis of my arrival." All the cares of the musketeer were then, for the moment, confined to the watching of Porthos. And let us hasten to say, Porthos did not deserve all this mistrust. Porthos thought of no evil. Perhaps, on first seeing him, D'Artagnan had inspired him with a little suspicion; but almost immediately D'Artagnan had reconquered in that good and brave heart the place he had always occupied, and not the least cloud darkened the large eye of Porthos, fixed from time to time with tenderness on his friend.

On landing, Porthos inquired if his horses were waiting, and he soon received them at the crossing of the road which turns round Sarzeau, and which, without passing through that little city, leads towards Vannes. These horses were two in number—one for M. de Valon, and one for his equerry; for Porthos had an equerry since Moustou was only able to use a carriage as a means of locomotion. D'Artagnan expected that Porthos would propose to send forward his equerry upon one horse to bring back the other horse, and he (D'Artagnan) had made up his mind to oppose this proposition. But nothing which D'Artagnan had expected happened. Porthos simply told the equerry to dismount and await his return at Sarzeau, whilst D'Artagnan would ride his horse, which was done.

"Eh! but you are quite a man of precaution, my dear Porthos," said D'Artagnan to his friend, when he found himself in the saddle upon the equerry's horse.

"Yes; but this is a kindness on the part of Aramis. I have not my stud here, and Aramis has placed his stables at my disposal."

"Good horses for bishop's horses, *mordieux!*" said D'Artagnan. "It is true, Aramis is a bishop of a peculiar kind."

"He is a holy man!" replied Porthos, in a tone almost nasal, and with his eyes raised towards heaven.

"Then he is much changed," said D'Artagnan; "you and I have known him passably profane."

"Grace has touched him," said Porthos.

"Bravo!" said D'Artagnan; "that redoubles my desire to see my dear old friend." And he spurred his horse, which sprang off into a more rapid pace.

"*Peste!*" said Porthos, "if we go on at this rate, we shall only take one hour instead of two."

"To go how far do you say, Porthos?"—"Four leagues and a half."

"That will be a good pace."

"I could have embarked you on the canal, but the devil take rowers and boat-horses! The first are like tortoises, the second like snails; and when a man is able to put a good horse between his knees, that horse is better worth than rowers or any other means."

"You are right; you, above all, Porthos, who always look magnificent on horseback."

"Rather heavy, my friend; I was weighed the other day."

"And what do you weigh?"

"Three hundredweight!" said Porthos, proudly.

"Bravo!"—"So that, you must perceive, that I am forced to choose horses whose loins are straight and wide, otherwise I break them down in two hours."

"Yes, giant's horses you must have, must you not?"

"You are very polite, my friend," replied the engineer, with an affectionate majesty.

"As a case in point," replied D'Artagnan, "your horse seems to sweat already."

"*Dame!* it is hot! Ah, ah! do you see Vannes now?"

"Yes, perfectly. It is a handsome city, apparently."

"Charming—according to Aramis, at least; but I think it black. But black seems to be considered handsome by artists; I am very sorry for it."

"Why so, Porthos?"

"Because I have lately had my château of Pierrefonds, which was grey with age, plastered white."

"Humph !" said D'Artagnan, "but white is more cheerful."

"Yes, but it is less august, as Aramis tells me. Fortunately there are dealers in black as well as white. I will have Pierrefonds replastered in black—that is, the whole of it. If grey is handsome, you understand, my friend, black must be superb."

"*Dame !*" said D'Artagnan, "that appears logical."

"Were you never at Vannes, D'Artagnan ?"

"Never."—"Then you know nothing of the city ?"—"Nothing."

"Well, look !" said Porthos, raising himself in his stirrups, which made the fore-quarters of his horse bend sadly, "do you see that corner, in the sun, yonder ?"—"Yes, I see it plainly."

"Well, that is the cathedral."—"Which is called ?"

"Saint-Pierre. Now, look again—in the faubourg on the left, do you see another cross ?"—"Perfectly well."

"That is Saint-Paterne, the parish preferred by Aramis."—"Indeed !"

"Without doubt. Saint-Paterne, see you, passes for having been the first bishop of Vannes. It is true that Aramis pretends that he was not ; but he is so learned that that may be only a paro—a para——"

"But a paradox," said D'Artagnan.

"Precisely ; thank you ! My tongue trips ; I am so hot."

"My friend," said D'Artagnan, "continue your interesting description, I beg. What is that large white building with many windows ?"

"Oh ! that is the college of the Jesuits. *Pardieu !* you have a lucky hand. Do you see, close to the college, a large house with steeples, turrets, and built in a handsome Gothic style, as that brute, M. Gétard, says ?"

"Yes, that is plainly to be seen. Well ?"

"Well, that is where Aramis resides."

"What ! does he not reside at the episcopal palace ?"

"No ; that is in ruins. The palace likewise is in the city, and Aramis prefers the faubourgs. That is why, as I told you, he is partial to Saint-Paterne ; Saint-Paterne is in the faubourg. Besides, there are in this faubourg a mail, a tennis-court, and a house of Dominicans. Look, that where the handsome steeple rises to the heavens."—"Well ?"

"Next, see you, the faubourg is like a separate city, it has its walls, its towers, its ditches ; the quay is upon it likewise, and the boats land at the quay. If our little corsair did not draw eight feet water, we could have come full sail up to Aramis's windows."

"Porthos, Porthos," cried D'Artagnan, "you are a well of knowledge, a spring of ingenious and profound reflections. Porthos, you no longer surprise me, you confound me."

"Here we are arrived," said Porthos, turning the conversation with his usual modesty.

"And high time we were," thought D'Artagnan, "for Aramis's horse is melting away like a horse of ice." They entered almost at the same instant into the faubourg ; but scarcely had they gone a hundred paces when they were surprised to find the streets strewed with leaves and flowers. Against the old walls of Vannes, were hung the oldest and the strangest tapestries of France. From over balconies fell long white sheets stuck all over with bouquets. The streets were deserted ; it was plain that the whole population was assembled on one point. The blinds were closed, and the breeze penetrated into the houses under the hangings, which cast long black shades between their places of issue and the walls. Suddenly, at the turning of a street, chants struck the ears of the newly arrived travellers. A crowd in holiday garb appeared through the vapours of incense which

... to the heavens in blue flocks, and clouds of rose-leaves flew up high as the first stories. Above all heads were to be seen the cross and banners, the sacred symbols of religion. Then, beneath these crosses and banners, as if protected by them, was a whole world of young girls, clothed white, and crowned with corn-flowers. At the two sides of the street, losing the *cortège*, marched the guards of the garrison, carrying bouquets the barrels of their muskets and on the points of their lances. This was a procession. Whilst D'Artagnan and Porthos were looking on with a view of good taste, which disguised an extreme impatience to get forward, a magnificent daïs approached, preceded by a hundred Jesuits and a hundred Dominicans, and escorted by two archdeacons, a treasurer, a capitular, and twelve canons. A chanter with a thundering voice—a chanter certainly picked out from all the voices of France, as was the drum-major of the imperial guard from all the giants of the empire—a chanter escorted by four other chanters, who appeared to be there only to serve him as an accompaniment, made the air resound, and the windows of all the houses vibrate. Under the daïs appeared a pale and noble countenance, with black eyes, black hair streaked with threads of white, a delicate, compressed mouth, a prominent and angular chin. This head, full of graceful majesty, was covered with the episcopal mitre, a head-dress which gave it, in addition to the character of sovereignty, that of asceticism and evangelic meditation.

"Aramis!" cried the musketeer, involuntarily, as this lofty countenance passed before him. The prelate started at the sound of the voice. He raised his large black eyes, with their long lashes, and turned them without hesitation towards the spot whence the exclamation proceeded. At a glance, he saw Porthos and D'Artagnan close to him. On his part, D'Artagnan, thanks to the keenness of his sight, had seen all, seized all. The full portrait of the prelate had entered his memory, never to leave it. One thing had particularly struck D'Artagnan. On perceiving him, Aramis had coloured, then he had concentrated under his eyelids the fire of the look of the master, and the imperceptible affection of the look of the friend. It was evident that Aramis addressed this question to himself: "Why is D'Artagnan with Porthos, and what does he want at Vannes?" Aramis comprehended all that was passing in the mind of D'Artagnan, on turning his look upon him again, and seeing that he had not lowered his eyes. He knew the acuteness and intelligence of his friend; he feared to let him divine the secret of his blush and his astonishment. He was still the same Aramis, always having a secret to conceal. Therefore, to put an end to this look of an inquisitor, which it was necessary to get rid of at all events, and, at any price, a general extinguishes a battery which annoys him, Aramis stretched forth his beautiful white hand, upon which sparkled the amethyst of the pastoral ring; he cut the air with the sign of the cross, and poured out his benediction upon his two friends. Perhaps, thoughtful and absent, D'Artagnan, impious in spite of himself, might not have bent beneath this holy benediction; but Porthos saw his distraction, and laying his friendly hand upon the back of his companion, he crushed him down towards the earth. D'Artagnan was forced to give way; indeed, he was little short of being flat on the ground. In the mean time Aramis had passed. D'Artagnan, like Antæus, had only touched the ground, and he turned towards Porthos, almost angry. But there was no mistaking the intention of the brave Hercules; it was a feeling of religious propriety that had influenced him. Besides, speech, with Porthos, instead of disguising his thought, always completed it.

"It is very polite of him," said he, "to have given his benediction to us alone. Decidedly, he is a holy man, and a brave man." Less convinced than Porthos, D'Artagnan made no reply.

"Observe, my friend," continued Porthos, "he has seen us ; and instead of continuing to walk on at the simple pace of the procession, as he did just now,—see, what a hurry he is in ; do you see how the *cortège* is increasing its speed? He is eager to join us and embrace us, is that dear Aramis!"

"That is true," replied D'Artagnan, aloud.—Then to himself:—"It is equally true, he has seen me, the fox, and will have time to prepare himself to receive me."

But the procession had passed ; the road was free. D'Artagnan and Porthos walked straight up to the episcopal palace, which was surrounded by a numerous crowd, anxious to see the prelate return. D'Artagnan remarked, that this crowd was composed principally of citizens and military men. He recognised in the nature of these partisans the address of his friend. Aramis was not the man to seek for a useless popularity. He cared very little for being beloved by people who could be of no service to him. Women, children, and old men, that is to say, the *cortège* of ordinary pastors, was not the *cortège* for him.

Ten minutes after the two friends had passed the threshold of the palace, Aramis returned like a triumphant conqueror ; the soldiers presented arms to him as to a superior ; the citizens bowed to him as to a friend and a patron, rather than as a head of the Church. There was something in Aramis resembling those Roman senators, who had their doors always surrounded by clients. At the foot of the prison, he had a conference of half a minute with a Jesuit, who, in order to speak to him more secretly, passed his head under the *daïs*. He then re-entered his palace ; the doors closed slowly, and the crowd melted away, whilst chants and prayers were still resounding abroad. It was a magnificent day. Earthly perfumes were mingled with the perfumes of the air and the sea. The city breathed happiness, joy, and strength. D'Artagnan felt something like the presence of an invisible hand which had, all-powerfully, created this strength, this joy, this happiness, and spread everywhere these perfumes.

"Oh ! oh !" said he, "Porthos has got fat ; but Aramis is grown taller"

## CHAPTER LXXII.

### THE GRANDEUR OF THE BISHOP OF VANNES.

PORTHOS and D'Artagnan had entered the bishop's residence by a private door, as his personal friends. Of course, Porthos served D'Artagnan as guide. The worthy baron comported himself everywhere rather as if he were at home. Nevertheless, whether it was a tacit acknowledgment of the sanctity of the personage of Aramis and his character, or the habit of respecting him who imposed upon him morally, a worthy habit which had always made Porthos a model soldier and an excellent companion ; for all these reasons, say we, Porthos preserved in the palace of His Greatness the Bishop of Vannes a sort of reserve which D'Artagnan remarked at once, in the attitude he took with respect to the valets and officers. And yet this reserve did not go so far as to prevent his asking questions. Porthos questioned. They learned that His Greatness had just returned to his apartment, and was preparing to appear in familiar intimacy, less

majestic than he had appeared with his flock. After a quarter of an hour which D'Artagnan and Porthos passed in looking mutually at each other with the white of their eyes, and turning their thumbs in all the different positions which go from north to south, a door of the chamber opened, and His Greatness appeared, dressed in the undress, complete, of a prelate. Aramis carried his head high, like a man accustomed to command; his velvet robe was tucked up on one side, and his white hand was on his hip. He had retained the fine moustache, and the lengthened *royale* of the time of Louis XIII. He exhaled, on entering, that delicate perfume which, among elegant men and women of high fashion, never changes, and appears to be incorporated in the person, of whom it has become the natural emanation. In this case only, the perfume had retained something of the religious sublimity of incense. It no longer intoxicated, it penetrated; it no longer inspired desire, it inspired respect. Aramis, on entering the chamber, did not hesitate an instant; and without pronouncing one word, which, whatever it might be, would have been cold on such an occasion, he went straight up to the musketeer, so well disguised under the costume of M. Agnan, and pressed him in his arms with a tenderness which the most mistrustful could not have suspected of coldness or affectation.

D'Artagnan, on his part, embraced him with equal ardour. Porthos pressed the delicate hand of Aramis in his immense hands, and D'Artagnan remarked that His Greatness gave him his left hand, probably from habit, seeing that Porthos already ten times, had been near injuring his fingers covered with rings, by pounding his flesh in the vice of his fist. Warned by the pain, Aramis was cautious, and only presented flesh to be bruised, and not fingers to be crushed, against gold or the angles of diamonds.

Between two embraces, Aramis looked D'Artagnan in the face, offered him a chair, sitting down himself in the shade, observing that the light fell full upon the face of his interlocutor. The manœuvre, familiar to diplomatists and women, resembles much the advantage of the guard which, according to their skill or habit, combatants endeavour to take on the ground at a duel. D'Artagnan was not the dupe of this manœuvre; but he did not appear to perceive it. He felt himself caught; but, precisely because he was caught, he felt himself on the road to discovery, and it little imported to him, old condottière as he was, to be beaten in appearance, provided he drew from his pretended defeat the advantages of victory. Aramis began the conversation.

"Ah! dear friend! my good D'Artagnan," said he, "what an excellent chance!"

"It is a chance, my reverend companion," said D'Artagnan, "that I will call friendship. I seek you, as I always have sought you, when I had any grand enterprise to propose to you, or some hours of liberty to give you."

"Ah! indeed," said Aramis, without explosion, "you have been seeking me?"

"Eh! yes, he has been seeking you, Aramis," said Porthos, "and the proof is that he has unharboured me at Belle-Isle. That is amiable, is it not?"

"Ah! yes," said Aramis, "at Belle-Isle! certainly."

"Good!" said D'Artagnan, "there is my booby Porthos, without thinking of it, has fired the first cannon of attack."

"At Belle-Isle," said Aramis, "in that hole, in that desert! That is kind indeed!"

"And it was I who told him you were at Vannes," continued Porthos, in the same tone.

D'Artagnan armed his mouth with a finesse almost ironical.

"Yes, I knew, but I was willing to see," replied he.

"To see what?"—"If our old friendship still held out; if, on seeing each other, our heart, hardened as it is by age, would still let the old current of joy escape, which salutes the coming of a friend."

"Well, and you must have been satisfied," said Aramis.—"So, so."

"How is that?"—"Yes, Porthos said hush! and you—"

"Well! and I?"—"And you gave me your benediction."

"What would you have, my friend?" said Aramis, smiling; "that is the most precious thing that a poor prelate, like me, has to give."

"Indeed, my dear friend!"—"Doubtless."

"And yet they say at Paris that the bishopric of Vannes is one of the best in France."

"Ah! you are now speaking of temporal wealth," said Aramis, with a careless air.

"To be sure, I wish to speak of that; I hold by it, on my part."

"In that case, let me speak of it," said Aramis, with a smile.

"You own yourself to be one of the richest prelates in France?"

"My friend, since you ask me to give you an account, I will tell you that the bishopric of Vannes is worth about twenty thousand livres a year, neither more nor less. It is a diocese which contains a hundred and sixty parishes."

"That is very pretty," said D'Artagnan.

"It is superb!" said Porthos.

"And yet," resumed D'Artagnan, throwing his eye over Aramis, "you don't mean to bury yourself here for ever?"

"Pardon me. Only I do not admit the word *bury*."

"But it seems to me, that at this distance from Paris, a man is buried or nearly so."

"My friend, I am getting old," said Aramis; "the noise and bustle of a city no longer suit me. At fifty-seven, we ought to seek calm and meditation. I have found them here. What is there more beautiful, and stern at the same time, than this old Armorica. I find here, dear D'Artagnan, all that is opposite to what I formerly loved, and that is what must happen at the end of life, which is opposite to the beginning. A little of my old pleasure of former times still comes to salute me here, now and then, without diverting me from the road of salvation. I am still of this world, and yet, every step that I take, brings me nearer to God."

"Eloquent, wise, and discreet; you are an accomplished prelate, Aramis, and I offer you my congratulations."

"But," said Aramis, smiling, "you did not come here only for the purpose of paying me compliments. Speak, what brings you hither? May it be that, in some fashion or other, you want me?"

"Thank God, no, my friend," said D'Artagnan, "it is nothing of that kind,—I am rich and free."

"Rich!" exclaimed Aramis.

"Yes, rich for me; not for you, or Porthos, understand. I have an income of about fifteen thousand livres."

Aramis looked at him suspiciously. He could not believe—particularly on seeing his friend in such humble guise—that he had made so fine a fortune. Then D'Artagnan, seeing that the hour for explanations was come, related the history of his English adventures. During the recital he saw ten times the eyes of the prelate sparkle, and his slender fingers work convulsively. As to Porthos, it was not admiration he manifested for D'Ar-

nagnan, it was enthusiasm, it was delirium. When D'Artagnan had finished, "Well!" said Aramis.

"Well!" said D'Artagnan, "you see, then, I have in England friends and property, in France a treasure. If your heart tells you so, I offer them to you. That is what I came here for."

However firm was his look, he could not this time support the look of Aramis. He allowed, therefore, his eye to stray upon Porthos,—like the word which yields to too powerful a pressure, and seeks another road.

"At all events," said the bishop, "you have assumed a singular travelling costume, old friend."

"Frightful! I know it is. You may understand why I would not travel as a cavalier or a noble: since I became rich I am miserly."

"And you say, then, you came to Belle-Isle?" said Aramis, without transition.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan; "I knew I should find you and Porthos here."

"Find me!" cried Aramis. "Me! For the last year past I have not once crossed the sea."

"Oh," said D'Artagnan, "I should never have supposed you such a housekeeper."

"Ah, dear friend, I must tell you that I am no longer the man of former times. Riding on horseback is unpleasant to me; the sea fatigues me. I am a poor ailing priest, always complaining, always grumbling, and inclined to the austerities which appear to accord with old age—parleys with death. I abide, my dear D'Artagnan, I abide."

"Well, that is all the better, my friend, for we shall probably become neighbours soon."

"Bah!" said Aramis, with a degree of surprise he did not even seek to dissemble. "You, my neighbour!"

"*Mordieux!* yes."

"How so?"—"I am about to purchase some very profitable salt-mines, which are situated between Pirial and Croisic. Imagine, my friend, a clear profit of twelve per cent. Never any deficiency, never any idle expenses; the ocean, faithful and regular, brings every six hours its contingency to my coffers. I am the first Parisian who has dreamt of such a speculation. Do not say anything about it, I beg of you, and in a short time we will communicate on the matter. I am to have three leagues of country for thirty thousand livres."

Aramis darted a look at Porthos, as if to ask if all this were true, if some snare were not concealed beneath this outward indifference. But soon, as if ashamed of having consulted this poor auxiliary, he collected all his forces for a fresh assault and a fresh defence. "I heard that you had had some difference with the court, but that you had come out of it, as you know how to come out of everything, D'Artagnan, with the honours of war."

"I!" said the musketeer, with a burst of laughter that could not conceal his embarrassment: for, from these words, Aramis was not unlikely to be acquainted with his last relations with the king. "I! Oh, tell me all about that, pray, Aramis?"

"Yes; it was related to me, a poor bishop lost in the middle of the *Landes*, that the king had taken you as the confidant of his amours."

"With whom?"—"With Mademoiselle de Mancini."

D'Artagnan breathed freely again. "Ah! I don't say no to that," replied he.

"It appears that the king took you, one morning, over the bridge of Blois, to talk with his lady-love."

"That's true," said D'Artagnan. "And you know that, do you? Well, then, you must know that the same day I gave in my resignation."

"What, sincerely?"

"Nothing could be more sincere."

"It was after that, then, that you went to the Comte de la Fère's?"

"Yes."

"Afterwards to me?"—"Yes."

"And then Porthos?"—"Yes."

"Was it in order to pay us a simple visit?"

"No; I did not know you were engaged, and I wished to take you with me into England."

"Yes, I understand; and then you executed alone, wonderful man as you are, what you wanted to propose to us all four to do. I suspected you had had something to do in that famous restoration, when I learnt that you had been seen at King Charles's receptions, and that he appeared to treat you like a friend, or rather like a person to whom he was under an obligation."

"But how the devil could you learn all that?" asked D'Artagnan, who began to fear that the investigations of Aramis would extend further than he wished.

"Dear D'Artagnan," said the prelate, "my friendship resembles, in a degree, the solicitude of that night-watch whom we have in the little tower of the mole, at the extremity of the quay. That brave man every night lights a lantern to direct the barques which come from sea. He is concealed in his sentry-box, and the fishermen do not see him; but he follows them with interest; he divines them, he calls them; he attracts them into the way to the port. I resemble this watcher; from time to time some news reaches me, and recalls to my remembrance all that I loved. Then I follow the friends of old days over the stormy ocean of the world; I, a poor watcher, to whom God has kindly given the shelter of his sentry-box."

"Well, what did I do when I came from England?"

"Ah! there," replied Aramis, "you get out of my sight. I knew nothing of you since your return, D'Artagnan; my sight grows thick. I regretted you did not think of me. I wept over your forgetfulness. I was wrong. I see you again, and it is a festival, a great festival, I swear to you!—Hail to Athos?"

"Very well, thank you."

"And our young pupil, Raoul?"

"He seems to have inherited the skill of his father, Athos, and the strength of his tutor, Porthos."

"And on what occasion have you been able to judge of that?"

"Eh! mon Dieu! the eve of my departure from Paris."

"Indeed! what was it?"

"Yes; there was an execution at the Grève; and, in consequence of that execution a riot. We happened, by accident, to be in the riot; and in this riot we were obliged to have recourse to our swords. And he did wonders."

"Bah! what did he do?"

"Why, in the first place, he threw a man out of the window, as he would have thrown a bale of cotton."

"Come, that's pretty well," said Porthos,

"Then he drew, and cut and thrust away, as we fellows used to do in good old times."

"And what was the cause of this riot?" said Porthos.

D'Artagnan remarked upon the face of Aramis a complete indifference to this question of Porthos. "Why," said he, fixing his eyes upon Aramis, "on account of two farmers of the revenues, friends of M. Fouquet, whom the king forced to disgorge their plunder, and then hanged them."

A scarcely perceptible contraction of the prelate's brow showed that he had heard D'Artagnan's reply. "Oh, oh!" said Porthos; "and what were the names of these friends of M. Fouquet?"

"MM. d'Eymeris and Lyodot," said D'Artagnan. "Do you know those names, Aramis?"

"No," said the prelate, disdainfully; "they sound like the names of financiers."

"Exactly; so they were."

"Oh! M. Fouquet allows his friends to be hanged, then," said Porthos.

"And why not?" said Aramis.—"Why, it seems to me——"

"If these culprits were hanged, it was by order of the king. Now, M. Fouquet, although surintendant of the finances, has not, I believe, the right of life and death."

"That may be," said Porthos; "but in the place of M. Fouquet——"

Aramis was afraid Porthos was about to say something awkward, so interrupted him: "Come, D'Artagnan," said he; "this is quite enough about other people, let us talk a little about you."

"Of me you know all that I can tell you. On the contrary, let me hear a little about you, Aramis."

"I have told you, my friend. There is nothing of Aramis left in me."

"Nor of the Abbé d'Herblay even?"

"No, not even of him. You see a man whom God has taken by the hand, and whom he has conducted to a position that he could never have dared even to hope for."

"God?" asked D'Artagnan.—"Yes."

"Well, that is strange! I have been told it was M. Fouquet."

"Who told you that?" cried Aramis, without being able, with all the power of his will, to prevent the colour rising to his cheeks.

"*Ma foi!* why, Bazin?"

"The fool!"

"I do not say he is a man of genius, it is true; but he told me so; and after him I repeat it to you."

"I have never seen M. Fouquet," replied Aramis, with a look as pure and calm as that of a virgin who has never told a lie.

"Well, but if you have seen him and known him, there is no harm in that," replied D'Artagnan. "M. Fouquet is a very good sort of a man."

"Humph!"

"A great politician." Aramis made a gesture of indifference.

"An all-powerful minister."

"I only hold of the king and the pope."

"*Dame!* listen then," said D'Artagnan, in the most natural tone imaginable. "I said that because everybody here swears by M. Fouquet. The plain is M. Fouquet's; the salt-mines I am about to buy are M. Fouquet's; the island in which Porthos studies topography is M. Fouquet's; the garri-son is M. Fouquet's; the galleys are M. Fouquet's. I confess, then, that nothing would have surprised me in your enfeoffment, or rather in

that of your diocese, to M. Fouquet. He is another master than the king that is all ; and quite as powerful as the king."

"Thank God ! I am not enfeoffed to anybody ; I belong to nobody, and am entirely my own," replied Aramis, who, during this conversation, followed with his eye every gesture of D'Artagnan, every glance of Porthos. But D'Artagnan was impassible and Porthos motionless ; the thrusts aimed so skilfully were parried by an able adversary ; not one hit the mark. Nevertheless, both began to feel the fatigue of such a contest, and the announcement of supper was well received by everybody. Supper changed the course of conversation. Besides, they felt that, upon their guard as each one had been, they could neither of them boast of having the advantage. Porthos had understood nothing of what had been meant. He had held himself motionless, because Aramis had made him a sign not to stir. Supper, for him, was nothing but supper ; but that was quite enough for Porthos. The supper, then, went off very well. D'Artagnan was in high spirits. Aramis exceeded himself in kind affability. Porthos ate like old Pelops. Their talk was of war, finance, the arts, and love. Aramis played astonishment at every word of politics D'Artagnan risked. The long series of surprises increased the mistrust of D'Artagnan, as the eternal indifference of D'Artagnan provoked the suspicions of Aramis. At length D'Artagnan, designedly uttered the name of Colbert : he had reserved that stroke for the last.

"Who is this Colbert ?" asked the bishop.

"Oh ! come," said D'Artagnan to himself, "that is too strong ! We must be careful, *mordious* ! we must be careful."

And he then gave Aramis all the information respecting M. Colbert he could desire. The supper, or rather the conversation, was prolonged till one o'clock in the morning between D'Artagnan and Aramis. At two o'clock precisely Porthos had fallen asleep in his chair, and snored like an organ. At midnight he woke up, and they sent him to bed. "Hum," said he, "I was near falling asleep ; but that was all very interesting you were talking about."

At one o'clock Aramis conducted D'Artagnan to the chamber destined for him, which was the best in the episcopal residence. Two servants were placed at his command. "To-morrow, at eight o'clock," said he, taking leave of D'Artagnan ; "we will take, if agreeable to you, a ride on horseback with Porthos."

"At eight o'clock !" said D'Artagnan ; "so late ?"

"You know that I require seven hours' sleep," said Aramis.

"That is true."

"Good night, dear friend !" And he embraced the musketeer cordially.

D'Artagnan allowed him to depart ; then, as soon as the door was closed, "Good !" cried he, "at five o'clock I will be on foot."

This determination being made, he went to bed, and "folded the piece together," as people say.

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

IN WHICH PORTHOS BEGINS TO BE SORRY FOR HAVING COME WITH D'ARTAGNAN.

SCARCELY had D'Artagnan extinguished his taper, when Aramis, who had watched through his curtains the last glimmer of light in his friend's apartment, traversed the corridor on tiptoe, and went to Porthos's room

the giant, who had been in bed nearly an hour and a half, lay grandly stretched out upon the down bed. He was in that happy calm of the first sleep, which, with Porthos, resisted the noise of bells or the report of cannon; his head swam in that soft oscillation which reminds us of the soothing movement of a ship. In a moment Porthos would have gone to dream. The door of the chamber opened softly under the delicate pressure of the hand of Aramis. The bishop approached the sleeper. A thick carpet deadened the sounds of his steps, besides which, Porthos snored in a manner to drown all noise. He laid one hand on Porthos's shoulder—"Rouse," said he, "wake up, my dear Porthos." The voice of Aramis was soft and kind, but it conveyed more than a notice, it conveyed an order. His hand was light, but it indicated a danger. Porthos heard the voice and felt the hand of Aramis, even in the profoundness of his sleep. He started up: "Who goes there?" said he, in the giant's voice.

"Hush! hush! It is I," said Aramis.

"You, my friend? And what the devil do you wake me for?"

"To tell you that you must set off directly."

"Set off?"—"Yes."

"Where for?"—"For Paris."

Porthos bounded up in his bed, and then sank back again, fixing his great eyes in terror upon Aramis.

"For Paris?"—"Yes."

"A hundred leagues?" said he.

"A hundred and four," replied the bishop.

"Oh; *mon Dieu!*" sighed Porthos, lying down again, like those children who contend with their *bonne* to gain an hour or two more sleep.

"Thirty hours' riding," said Aramis, firmly. "You know there are good days."

Porthos pushed out one leg, allowing a groan to escape him.

"Come, come! my friend," insisted the prelate with a sort of impatience.

Porthos drew the other leg out of the bed. "And is it absolutely necessary that I should go?" said he.—"Urgently necessary."

Porthos got upon his feet and began to shake both walls and floors with the steps of a marble statue.

"Hush! hush! for the love of Heaven, my dear Porthos!" said Aramis, "you will wake somebody."

"Ah! that's true," replied Porthos in a voice of thunder, "I forgot that; but be satisfied, I will observe." And so saying, he let fall a belt loaded with his sword and pistols, and a purse, from which the crowns escaped with a vibrating and prolonged noise. This noise made the blood of Aramis boil, whilst it drew from Porthos a formidable burst of laughter.

"How droll that is!" said he, in the same voice.

"Not so loud, Porthos, not so loud."

"True, true!" and he lowered his voice a half-note.

"I was going to say," continued Porthos, "that it is droll that we are never so slow as when we are in a hurry, and never make so much noise when we wish to be silent."

"Yes, that is true; but let us give the proverb the lie, Porthos: let us make haste, and hold our tongues."

"You see I am doing my best," said Porthos, putting on his *haut deusses*,—"Very well,"

"This seems to be something in haste?"

"It is more than that, it is serious, Porthos."—"Oh, oh!"

"D'Artagnan has questioned you has he not?"

"Questioned me?"—"Yes, at Belle-Isle?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Are you sure of that, Porthos?"—"Parbleu!"

"It is impossible.—Recollect yourself."

"He asked me what I was doing, and I told him;—studying topography. I would have made use of another word which you employ one day."

"Of castrametation?"

"Yes, that's it; but I never could recollect it."

"All the better. What more did he ask you?"

"Who M. Gétard was."—"Next?"

"Who M. Jupenet was."

"He did not happen to see our plan of fortifications, did he?"

"Yes."

"The devil he did!"

"But don't be alarmed; I had rubbed out your writing, with India rubber. It was impossible for him to suppose you had given me any advice in those works."

"Ay; but our friend has very keen eyes."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I fear that everything is discovered, Porthos; the matter is, then, to prevent a great misfortune. I have given orders to my people to close all the gates and doors. D'Artagnan will not be able to get out before day-break. Your horse is ready saddled; you will gain the first relay; by five o'clock in the morning, you will have gone fifteen leagues. Come!"

Aramis then assisted Porthos to dress, piece by piece, with as much celerity as the most skilful *valet-de-chambre* could have done. Porthos, half confused, half stupefied, let him do as he liked, and confounded himself in excuses. When he was ready, Aramis took him by the hand, and led him, making him place his foot with precaution on every step of the stairs, preventing him running against door-frames, turning him this way and that, as if Aramis had been the giant and Porthos the dwarf. So they set fire to and elevated matter. A horse was waiting, ready saddled, in the courtyard. Porthos mounted. Then Aramis himself took the horse by the bridle, and led him over some dung spread in the yard, with evident intention of suppressing noise. He, at the same time, pinched the horse's nose, to prevent him neighing. When arrived at the outward gate, drawing Porthos towards him, who was going off without even asking him what for: "Now, friend Porthos, now; without drawing bridle, till you get to Paris," whispered he in his ears; "eat on horseback, drink on horseback, sleep on horseback, but lose not a minute."

"That's enough; I will not stop."

"This letter to M. Fouquet; cost what it may, he must have it to-morrow before mid-day."—"He shall have it."

"And do not forget one thing, my friend."

"What is that?"

"That you are riding after your *brevet* of *duc* and peer."

"Oh! oh!" said Porthos, with his eyes sparkling; "I will do it in twenty-four hours in that case."—"Try to do so."

"Then let go the bridle—and forward, Goliah!"

Aramis did let go, not the bridle; but the horse's nose; Porthos released

hand, clapped spurs to his horse, which set off at a gallop. As long as he could distinguish Porthos through the darkness, Aramis followed him with his eyes; when he was completely out of sight, he re-entered the apartment. Nothing had stirred in D'Artagnan's apartment. The *valet* placed a watch at the door, had neither seen any light, nor heard any noise. Aramis closed his door carefully, sent the lackey to bed, and quickly to bed himself. D'Artagnan really suspected nothing; therefore thought he had gained everything, when he awoke in the morning, about half-past six. He ran to the window in his shirt. The window looked out upon the court. Day was dawning. The court was deserted; the fowls, even, had not yet left their roosts. Not a servant appeared. All the doors were closed.

"Good! perfect calm," said D'Artagnan to himself. "Never mind: I am up first in the house. Let us dress; that will be so much done." And D'Artagnan dressed himself. But, this time, he endeavoured not to give up the costume of M. Agnan that *bourgeoise* and almost ecclesiastical simplicity he had affected before; he managed, by drawing his belt tighter, and buttoning his clothes in a different fashion, and by putting on his hat a little on one side, to restore to his person a little of that military character, the absence of which had surprised Aramis. This being done, he made himself at home, or affected to make free, with his host, and entered his chamber without ceremony. Aramis was asleep, or feigned to be asleep. A large book lay open upon his night-desk, a wax-light was still burning above its silver chandelier. This was more than enough to prove to D'Artagnan the innocence of the night of the prelate, and the good intentions of his waking. The musketeer did to the bishop precisely as the bishop had done to Porthos—he tapped him on the shoulder. Evidently Aramis pretended to sleep; for, instead of waking suddenly, he who slept so lightly, he required a repetition of the summons.

"Ah! ah! is that you?" said he, stretching his arms. "What an agreeable surprise! *Ma foi!* Sleep had made me forget I had the happiness to possess you. What o'clock is it?"

"I do not know," said D'Artagnan, a little embarrassed. "Early, I believe. But, you know, that devil of a habit of waking with the day sticks me still."

"Do you wish that we should go out so soon?" asked Aramis. "It appears to me to be very early."

"Just as you like."

"I thought we had agreed not to get on horseback before eight."

"Possibly: but I had so great a wish to see you, that I said to myself, the sooner the better."

"And my seven hours' sleep," said Aramis: "take care; I had reckoned on them, and what I lose of them I must make up."

"But it seems to me that, formerly, you were less of a sleeper than that, dear friend; your blood was alive, and you were never to be found in bed."

"And it is exactly on account of what you tell me, that I am so fond of sleeping there now."

"Then you confess, that it is not for the sake of sleeping, that you have kept me off till eight o'clock."

"I have been afraid you would laugh at me, if I told you the truth."

"Tell me, notwithstanding."

"Well, from six to eight, I am accustomed to perform my devotions."

"Your devotions?"—"Yes."

"I did not believe a bishop's exercises were so severe."

"A bishop, my friend, must sacrifice more to appearances than a simple clerk."

"*Mordieux!* Aramis, that is a word which reconciles me with your greatness. To appearances! That is a musketeer's word, in good truth. *Vivent les apparences*, Aramis!"

"Instead of felicitating me upon it, pardon me, D'Artagnan. It is a very mundane word which I have allowed to escape me."

"Must I leave you, then?"

"I want time to collect my thoughts, my friend, and for my usual prayers."

"Well, I leave you to them; but, on account of that poor pagan, D'Artagnan, abridge them for once, I beg: I thirst for speech of you."

"Well, D'Artagnan, I promise you that within an hour and a half——"

"An hour and a half of devotions! Ah! my friend, be as reasonable with me as you can. Let me have the best bargain possible."

Aramis began to laugh.

"Still agreeable, still young, still gay," said he. "You have come into my diocese to set me quarrelling with grace."—"Bah!"

"And you know well that I was never able to resist your seductions; you will cost me my salvation, D'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan bit his lips.

"Well," said he, "I will take the sin on my own head; favour me with one simple Christian sign of the cross, favour me with one pater, and we will part."

"Hush!" said Aramis, "we are already no longer alone; I hear strangers coming up."—"Well, dismiss them."

"Impossible; I made an appointment with them yesterday. It is the principal of the college of the Jesuits, and the superior of the Dominicans."

"Your staff? Well, so be it."

"What are you going to do?"

"I will go and wake Porthos, and remain in his company till you have finished the conference."

Aramis did not stir, his brow remained unbent, he betrayed himself by no gesture or word. "Go," said he, as D'Artagnan advanced to the door.

"*A propos*, do you know where Porthos sleeps?"

"No, but I can inquire."

"Take the corridor, and open the second door on the left."

"Thank you; *au revoir!*" And D'Artagnan departed in the direction pointed out by Aramis.

Ten minutes had not passed away when he came back. He found Aramis seated between the superior of the Dominicans and the principal of the college of the Jesuits, exactly in the same situation as he had found him formerly in the auberge at Crèveœur. This company did not at all terrify the musketeer.

"What is it?" said Aramis, quietly. "You have, apparently, something to say to me, my friend."

"It is," replied D'Artagnan, fixing his eyes upon Aramis—"it is that Porthos is not in his apartment."

"Indeed!" said Aramis, calmly; "are you sure?"—"*Pardieu!* I came from his chamber."

"Where can he be, then?"—"That is what I ask you."

"And have not you inquired?"—"Yes, I have."

"And what answer did you get?"—"That Porthos, often going out in a morning without saying anything, was probably gone out."

"What did you do, then?"—"I went to the stables," replied D'Artagnan, carelessly.

"What to do?"—"To see if Porthos was gone out on horseback."

"And?" interrogated the bishop.—"Well, there is a horse missing—all No. 3, Goliah."

All this dialogue, it may be easily understood, was not exempt from a certain affectation on the part of the musketeer, and a perfect complaisance on the part of Aramis.

"Oh! I guess how it is," said Aramis, after having considered for a moment—"Porthos is gone out to give us a surprise."

"A surprise?"

"Yes: the canal which goes from Vannes to the sea abounds in teal and snipes; that is Porthos's favourite sport, and he will bring us back a dozen for breakfast."

"Do you think so?" said D'Artagnan.

"I am sure of it. Where else can he be? I would lay a wager he took gun with him."

"Well, that is possible," said D'Artagnan.

"Do one thing, my friend: get on horseback, and join him."

"You are right," said D'Artagnan; "I will."

"Shall I go with you?"—"No, thank you. Porthos is rather remarkable; I will inquire as I go along."

"Will you take an arquebuse?"—"Thank you."

"Order what horse you like to be saddled."

"The one I rode yesterday, on coming from Belle-Isle."

"So be it; use the horse as your own."

Aramis rang, and gave orders to have the horse M. d'Artagnan had chosen saddled.

D'Artagnan followed the servant charged with the execution of this order. When arrived at the door, the servant drew on one side to allow M. d'Artagnan to pass; and at that moment he caught the eye of his master. A knitting of the brow gave the intelligent spy to understand that all should be given to D'Artagnan he wished. D'Artagnan got into the saddle, and Aramis heard the steps of his horse on the pavement. An instant after, the servant returned.

"Well?" asked the bishop.

"Monseigneur, he has followed the course of the canal, and is going towards the sea," said the servant.

"Very well!" said Aramis.

In fact, D'Artagnan, dismissing all suspicion, hastened towards the ocean, constantly hoping to see in the *Landes*, or on the beach, the colossal profile of Porthos. He persisted in fancying he could trace a horse's step in every puddle. Sometimes he imagined he heard the report of a gun. This illusion lasted three hours: during two of them he went forward in search of his friend; in the last he returned to the house.

"We must have crossed," said he, "and I shall find them waiting for me at table."

D'Artagnan was mistaken; he no more found Porthos at the palace than he had found him on the sea-shore. Aramis was waiting for him at the top of the stairs, looking very much concerned.

"Did my people not find you, my dear D'Artagnan?" cried he, as soon as he caught sight of the musketeer.

"No; did you send any one after me?"

"I am deeply concerned, my friend, deeply, to have induced you to

take such a useless search ; but, about seven o'clock, the almoner of Saint-Paterne came here. He had met Du Valon, who was going away, and who, being unwilling to disturb anybody at the palace, had charged him to tell me that, fearing M. Gétard would play him some ill turn in his absence, he was going to take advantage of the morning tide to make a tour to Belle-Isle."

"But tell me, Goliah has not crossed the four leagues of sea, I should think?"

"There are full six," said Aramis.

"That makes it less probable still."

"Therefore, my friend," said Aramis, with one of his most bland smiles, "Goliah is in the stable, well pleased, I will answer for it, that Porthos is no longer on his back." In fact, the horse had been brought back from the relay by the direction of the prelate, from whom no detail escaped. D'Artagnan appeared as well satisfied as possible with the explanation. He entered upon a part of dissimulation which agreed perfectly with the suspicions that arose more and more strongly in his mind. He breakfasted between the Jesuit and Aramis, having the Dominican in front of him, and smiling particularly at the Dominican, whose jolly fat face pleased him much. The repast was long and sumptuous ; excellent Spanish wine, fine Morbitran oysters, exquisite fish from the mouth of the Loire, enormous prawns from Paimbœuf, and delicious game from the moors, constituted the principal part of it. D'Artagnan ate much, and drank but little. Aramis drank nothing, unless it was water. After the repast,—

"You offered me an arquebuse," said D'Artagnan.

"I did."—"Lend it me, then."

"Are you going shooting?"

"Whilst waiting for Porthos, it is the best thing I can do, I think."

"Take which you like from the trophy."

"Will you not come with me?"

"I would with great pleasure ; but, alas ! my friend, sporting is forbidden to bishops."

"Ah !" said D'Artagnan, "I did not know that."

"Besides," continued Aramis, "I shall be busy till mid-day."

"I shall go alone, then?" said D'Artagnan.

"I am sorry to say you must ; but come back to dinner."

"Adieu ! the eating at your house is too good to make me think of not coming back." And thereupon D'Artagnan quitted his host, bowed to the guests, and took his arquebuse ; but, instead of shooting, went straight to the little port of Vannes. He looked in vain to observe if anybody saw him ; he could discern neither thing nor person. He engaged a little fishing-boat for twenty-five livres, and set off at half-past eleven, convinced that he had not been followed ; and that was true, he had not been followed, only a Jesuit brother, placed in the top of the steeple of his church, had not, since the morning, by the help of an excellent glass, lost sight of one of his steps. At three-quarters past eleven, Aramis was informed that D'Artagnan was sailing towards Belle-Isle. The voyage was rapid ; a good north-east wind drove him towards the isle. As he approached, his eyes were constantly fixed upon the coast. He looked to see if, upon the shore or upon the fortifications, the brilliant dress and vast stature of Porthos should stand out against a slightly clouded sky ; but his search was in vain. He landed without having seen anything ; and learnt from the first soldier interrogated by him, that M. du Valon was not yet returned from Vannes. Then, without losing an instant, D'Artagnan ordered his

the barque to put its head towards Sarzeau. We know that the wind changes with the different hours of the day. The wind had gone round on the north-north-east to the south-east; the wind, then, was almost as good for the return to Sarzeau, as it had been for the voyage to Belle-Isle. Three hours D'Artagnan had touched the continent; two hours more sufficed for his ride to Vannes. In spite of the rapidity of his passage, D'Artagnan endured of impatience and anger during that short passage, the deck alone of the vessel, upon which he stamped backwards and forwards for three hours, could relate to history. He made but one bound from the quay whereon he landed, to the episcopal palace. He thought to sur prise Aramis by the promptitude of his return; he wished to reproach him with his duplicity, and yet with reserve; but with sufficient spirit, nevertheless, to make him feel all the consequences of it, and force from him a part of his secret. He hoped, in short—thanks to that heat of expression which is to mysteries what the charge with the bayonet is to doubts—to bring the mysterious Aramis to some manifestation or other. He found in the vestibule of the palace, the *valet de chambre*, who opened the passage, while smiling upon him with a stupid air.

"Monseigneur?" cried D'Artagnan, endeavouring to put him aside with his hand. Moved for an instant, the valet resumed his station.

"Monseigneur?" said he.—"Yes, to be sure; do you not know me; *bécile*?"

"Yes; you are the Chevalier d'Artagnan."—"Then let me pass."

"It is of no use."—"Why of no use?"

"Because His Greatness is not at home."—"What! His Greatness not at home? where is he then?"—"Gone."

"Gone?"—"Yes."

"Whither?"—"I don't know; but, perhaps he tells monsieur le chevalier."

"And how? where? in what fashion?"

"In this letter which he gave me for monsieur le chevalier." And the *valet de chambre* drew a letter from his pocket.

"Give it me, then, you rascal," said D'Artagnan, snatching it from his hand. "Oh, yes," continued he, at the first line, "yes, I understand;" and he read:—

DEAR FRIEND,—An affair of the most urgent nature calls me to a distant parish of my diocese. I hoped to see you again before I set out; but I lose that hope in thinking that you are going, no doubt, to remain two or three days at Belle-Isle, with our dear Porthos. Amuse yourself as well as you can; but do not attempt to hold out against him at table. This is my counsel I might have given even to Athos, in his most brilliant and best days. Adieu, dear friend; believe that I regret greatly not having better luck for a longer time, profited by your excellent company."

"*Mordieux!*" cried D'Artagnan. "I am tricked. Ah! blockhead, brute, the fool that I am! But let them laugh who laugh last. Oh, duped, deceived, like a monkey cheated with an empty nutshell!" And with a hearty blow bestowed upon the nose of the still grinning *valet-de-chambre*, he made all haste out of the episcopal palace. Furet, however good a forger was not equal to present circumstances. D'Artagnan, therefore, dismounted, and chose a horse, which he made to understand, with good words and a light hand, that stags are not the most agile creatures in the forest.

## CHAPTER LXXIV.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN MAKES ALL SPEED, PORTHOS SNORES, AND ARAMIS COUNSELS.

FROM thirty to thirty-five hours after the events we have just related, as M. Fouquet, according to his custom, having interdicted his door, was working in the cabinet of his house at Saint Mandé, with which we are already acquainted, a carriage drawn by four horses streaming with sweat, entered the court at full gallop. This carriage was, probably, expected; for three or four lackeys hastened to the door, which they opened. Whilst M. Fouquet rose from his bureau and ran to the window, a man got painfully out of the carriage, descending with difficulty the three steps of the door, leaning upon the shoulders of his lackeys. He had scarcely uttered his name, when the *valet*, upon whom he was not leaning, sprang up the *perron* and disappeared in the vestibule. This man went to inform his master, but he had no occasion to knock at the door: Fouquet was standing at the threshold.

"Monseigneur, the bishop of Vannes," said he.

"Very well," replied his master.

Then, leaning over the banister of the staircase, of which Aramis was beginning to ascend the first steps,—

"You, dear friend!" said he, "you, so soon!"

"Yes; I, myself, monsieur! but bruised, battered, as you see."

"Oh! my poor dear friend," said Fouquet, presenting him his arm upon which Aramis leant, whilst the servants drew back with respect.

"Bah!" replied Aramis, "it is nothing, since I am here. The principal thing was that I should get here, and here I am."

"Speak quickly," said Fouquet, closing the door of the cabinet behind Aramis and himself.

"Are we alone?"—"Yes, perfectly."

"No one can listen to us?—no one can hear us?"

"Be satisfied; nobody."

"Is M. du Valon arrived?"—"Yes."

"And you have received my letter?"

"Yes. The affair is serious, apparently, since it necessitates your presence in Paris, at a moment when your presence was so urgent elsewhere."

"You are right; it cannot be more serious."

"Thank you! thank you! What is it about? But, for God's sake, before anything else, take time to breathe, dear friend. You are so pale, you frighten me."

"I am really in great pain. But, for Heaven's sake, think nothing about me. Did M. du Valon tell you nothing, when he delivered the letter to you?"

"No; I heard a great noise; I went to the window; I saw at the foot of the *perron* a sort of horseman of marble; I went down, he held the letter out to me, and his horse fell down dead."

"But he?"

"He fell with the horse; he was lifted up, and carried to an apartment. Having read the letter, I went up to him, in hopes of obtaining more ample information; but he was asleep, and, after such a fashion, that it was impossible to wake him. I took pity on him; I gave orders that his boots should be taken off, and that he should be left quite 'undisturbed.'"

"So far well ; now, this is the question in hand, monseigneur. You have seen M. d'Artagnan in Paris, have you not ?"

"*Certes*, and think him a man of intelligence, and even a man of heart ; though he did bring about the death of our dear friends, Lyodot and Eymerys."

"Alas ! yes, I heard of that. At Tours, I met the courier, who was bringing me the letter from Gourville, and the despatches from Pellisson. Have you seriously reflected on that event, monsieur ?"—"Yes."

"And in it you perceived a direct attack upon your sovereignty ?"

"And do you believe it to be so ?"

"Oh, yes, I think so."

"Well, I must confess, that sad idea occurred to me likewise."

"Do not blind yourself, monsieur, in the name of Heaven ! Listen attentively to me.—I return to D'Artagnan."

"I am all attention."

"Under what circumstances did you see him ?"

"He came here for money."

"With what kind of order !"—"With an order from the king."

"Direct ?"—"Signed by his majesty."

"There, then ! Well, D'Artagnan has been to Belle-Isle ; he was disguised ; he came in the character of some sort of an *intendant*, charged by his master to purchase salt-mines. Now, D'Artagnan has no other master but the king ; he came, then, sent by the king. He saw Porthos."

"Who is Porthos ?"

"I beg your pardon, I made a mistake. He saw M. du Valon at Belle-Isle ; and he knows, as well as you and I do, that Belle-Isle is fortified."

"And you think that the king sent him there ?" said Fouquet, pensively.

"I certainly do."

"And D'Artagnan, in the hands of the king, is a dangerous instrument ?"

"The most dangerous imaginable."

"Then I formed a correct opinion of him at the first glance."

"How so ?"—"I wished to attach him to myself."

"If you judged him to be the bravest, the most acute, and the most adroit man in France, you have judged correctly."

"He must be had then, at any price."

"D'Artagnan ?"

"Is not that your opinion ?"

"It may be my opinion, but you will never have him."—"Why ?"

"Because we have allowed the time to go by. He was dissatisfied with the court, we should have profited by that ; since that, he has passed into England ; there he powerfully assisted in the restoration, there he gained a fortune, and, after all, he returned to the service of the king. Well, if he has returned to the service of the king, it is because he has been well paid in that service."

"We will pay him still better, that is all."

"Oh ! monsieur, excuse me ; D'Artagnan has a high sense of his word, and where that word is once engaged, that word remains where it is."

"What do you conclude, then ?" said Fouquet, with great inquietude.

"At present, the principal thing is to parry a dangerous blow."

"And how is it to be parried ?"—"Listen."

"But D'Artagnan will come and render an account to the king of his mission."

"Oh, we have time enough to think about that."

"How so? You are much in advance of him, I presume?"

"Nearly ten hours."

"Well, in ten hours——"

Aramis shook his pale head. "Look at these clouds which flit across the heavens; at these swallows which cut the air. D'Artagnan moves more quickly than the clouds or the birds; D'Artagnan is the wind which carries them."

"A strange man!"

"I tell you, he is something superhuman, monsieur. He is of my age and I have known him these five-and-thirty years."

"Well?"—"Well, listen to my calculation, monsieur. I sent M. du Valon off to you at two hours after midnight. M. du Valon was eight hours in advance of me; when did M. du Valon arrive?"

"About four hours ago."

"You see, then, that I gained four upon him; and yet Porthos is a staunch horseman, and he has left on the road eight dead horses, whose bodies I came to successively. I rode post fifty leagues; but I have the gout, the gravel, and what else I know not; so that fatigue kills me. I was obliged to dismount at Tours; since that, rolling along in a carriage half-dead, sometimes overturned, often drawn upon the sides, and sometimes on the back of the carriage, always with four spirited horses at full gallop, I have arrived—arrived, gaining four hours upon Porthos; but, see you, D'Artagnan does not weigh three hundred-weight, as Porthos does. D'Artagnan has not the gout and gravel, as I have; he is not a horseman, he is a centaur. D'Artagnan, see you, set out for Belle-Isle when I set out for Paris; and D'Artagnan, notwithstanding my ten hours' advance, D'Artagnan will arrive within two hours after me."

"But, then, accidents?"—"He never meets with any accidents."

"Horses may fail him."—"He will run as fast as a horse."

"Good God! what a man!"

"Yes, he is a man whom I love and admire. I love him because he is good, great, and loyal; I admire him because he represents with me the culminating point of human powers; but, whilst loving and admiring him, I fear him, and am on my guard against him. Now then, I resume, monsieur; in two hours D'Artagnan will be here; be beforehand with him. Go to the Louvre, and see the king before he sees D'Artagnan."

"What shall I say to the king?"

"Nothing; give him Belle-Isle."

"Oh! Monsieur d'Herblay! Monsieur d'Herblay," cried Fouquet, "what projects crushed all at once!"

"After one project that has failed, there is always another project which may lead to good; we should never despair. Go, monsieur, and go quickly."

"But that garrison, so carefully chosen, the king will change it directly."

"That garrison, monsieur, was the king's when it entered Belle-Isle; it is yours now; it will be the same with all garrisons after a fortnight's occupation. Let things go on, monsieur. Do you see any inconvenience in having an army at the end of a year, instead of two regiments? Do you not see that your garrison of to-day will make you partisans at La Rochelle, Nantes, Bordeaux, Toulouse—in short, wherever they may be sent to? Go to the king, monsieur; go; time flies, and D'Artagnan, while we are losing time, is flying like an arrow along the high-road."

"Monsieur d'Herblay, you know that each word from you is a germ which fructifies in my thoughts. I will go to the Louvre."

"Instantly, will you not?"

"I only ask time to change my dress."

"Remember that D'Artagnan has no need to pass through St. Mandé, it will go straight to the Louvre; that is cutting off an hour from the vance which remains to us."

"D'Artagnan may have everything except my English horses. I shall be at the Louvre in twenty-five minutes." And, without losing a second, Fouquet gave orders for his departure.

Aramis had only time to say to him, "Return as quickly as you go; for I shall await you impatiently."

Five minutes after, the surintendant was flying along the road to Paris. During this time, Aramis desired to be shown the chamber in which Porthos was sleeping. At the door of Fouquet's cabinet he was folded in the arms of Pellisson, who had just heard of his arrival, and had left his face to see him. Aramis received with that friendly dignity which he knew so well how to assume, those caresses as respectful as earnest: but, all at once, stopping on the landing-place, "What is that I hear up under?"

There was, in fact, a hoarse growling kind of noise, like the roar of a hungry tiger, or an impatient lion. "Oh, that is nothing," said Pellisson, smiling.

"Well; but——"

"It is M. du Valon snoring."

"Ah! true," said Aramis; "I had forgotten. No one but he is capable of making such a noise. Allow me, Pellisson, to inquire if he wants anything."

"And you will permit me to accompany you?"

"Oh, certainly;" and both entered the chamber. Porthos was stretched upon the bed; his face was violet rather than red; his eyes were swelled; his mouth was wide open. The roaring which escaped from the deep cavities of his chest made the glass of the windows vibrate. To those developed and clearly defined muscles starting from his face, to his hair matted with sweat, to the energetic heaving of his chin and shoulders, it was impossible to refuse a certain degree of admiration. Strength carried to this point is almost divinity. The Herculean legs and feet of Porthos had, by swelling, burst his leather boots; all the strength of his enormous body was converted into the rigidity of stone. Porthos moved no more than does the giant of granite which reclines upon the plains of Agrigento. According to Pellisson's orders, his boots had been cut off, for no human power could have pulled them off. Four lackeys had tried in vain, pulling at them as they would have pulled capstans; and yet all this did not awaken him. They had taken off his boots in fragments, and his legs had fallen back upon the bed. They then cut off the rest of his clothes, carried him to a bath, in which they let him lie a considerable time. They then put on him clean linen, and placed him in a well-warmed bed—the whole with efforts and pains which might have roused a dead man, but which did not make Porthos open an eye, or interrupt for a second the formidable organ of his snoring. Aramis wished, on his part, with a dry, nervous nature, armed with extraordinary courage, to outbrave fatigue, and employ himself with Gourville and Pellisson, but he fainted in the chair in which he had persisted to remain. He was carried into the adjoining room, where the repose of bed soon calmed his throbbing brain.

## CHAPTER LXXV.

## IN WHICH MONSIEUR FOUQUET ACTS.

IN the meantime Fouquet was hastening to the Louvre, at the best speed of his English horses. The king was at work with Colbert. All at once the king became thoughtful. The two sentences of death he had signed on mounting his throne sometimes recurred to his memory : they were two black spots which he saw with his eyes open ; two spots of blood which he saw when his eyes were closed. "Monsieur," said he, rather sharply, to the intendant, "it sometimes seems to me that those two men you made me condemn were not very great culprits."

"Sire, they were picked out from the herd of the farmers of the finance which wanted decimating."

"Picked out by whom?"

"By necessity, sire," replied Colbert, coldly.

"Necessity !—a great word," murmured the young king.

"A great goddess, sire."

"They were devoted friends of the surintendant, were they not?"

"Yes, sire ; friends who would have given their lives to Monsieur Fouquet."

"They have given them, monsieur," said the king.

"That is true ;—but uselessly, by good luck,—which was not their intention."

"How much money had these men fraudulently obtained?"

"Ten millions, perhaps ; of which six have been confiscated."

"And is that money in my coffers?" said the king with a certain air of repugnance."

"It is there, sire ; but this confiscation, whilst threatening M. Fouquet has not touched him."

"You conclude, then, M. Colbert——"

"That if M. Fouquet has raised against your majesty a troop of factious rioters to extricate his friends from punishment, he will raise an army when he shall have to extricate himself from punishment."

The king darted at his confidant one of those looks which resemble the red fire of a stormy flash of lightning, one of those looks which illuminate the darkness of the deepest consciences. "I am astonished," said he "that, thinking such things of M. Fouquet, you did not come to give me your counsels thereupon."

"Counsels upon what, sire?"

"Tell me, in the first place, clearly and precisely, what you think, M. Colbert."

"Upon what subject, sire?"

"Upon the conduct of M. Fouquet."

"I think, sire, that M. Fouquet, not satisfied with attracting all the money to himself, as M. Mazarin did, and by that means depriving your majesty of one part of your power, still wishes to attract to himself all the friends of easy life and pleasures,—of what idlers call poetry, and politicians corruption. I think that, by holding the subjects of your majesty in pay, he trespasses upon the royal prerogative, and cannot, if this continues so, be long in placing your majesty among the weak and obscure."

"How would you qualify all these projects, M. Colbert?"

"The projects of M. Fouquet, sire?"

"Yes."—"They are called crimes of *lèse majesté*."

"And what is done to criminals guilty of *lèse majesté*?"

"They are arrested, tried, and punished."

"You are quite sure that M. Fouquet has conceived the idea of the crime you impute to him?"

"I can say more, sire; there is even a commencement of the execution of it."

"Well, then, I return to that which I was saying, M. Colbert."

"And you were saying, sire?"

"Give me counsel."

"Pardon me, sire; but, in the first place, I have something to add."

"Say—what?"

"An evident, palpable, material proof of treason."

"And what is that?"

"I have just learnt that M. Fouquet is fortifying Belle-Isle."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Yes, sire."

"Are you sure?"

"Perfectly. Do you know, sire what soldiers there are at Belle-Isle?"

"No, *ma foi*! Do you?"

"I am ignorant likewise, sire; I should therefore propose to your majesty to send somebody to Belle-Isle."

"Who?"—"Me, for instance."

"And what would you do at Belle-Isle?"

"Inform myself whether, after the example of the ancient feudal lords, M. Fouquet was embattlementing his walls."

"And with what purpose could he do that?"

"With the purpose of defending himself some day against his king."

"But if it be thus, M. Colbert," said Louis, "we must immediately do as you say; M. Fouquet must be arrested."

"That is impossible."

"I thought I had already told you, monsieur, that I suppressed that word in my service."

"The service of your majesty cannot prevent M. Fouquet from being intendant-général."

"Well?"—"That, in consequence of holding that post, he has for him the parliament, as he has all the army by his largesses, all literature by his favours, and all the *noblesse* by his presents."

"That is to say, then, that I can do nothing against M. Fouquet?"

"Absolutely nothing,—at least at present, sire."

"You are a sterile counsellor, M. Colbert."

"Oh no, sire; for I will not confine myself to pointing out the peril to our majesty."

"Come, then, where shall we begin to undermine the Colossus? let us begin;" and his majesty began to laugh with bitterness.

"He has grown great by money: kill him by money, sire."

"If I were to deprive him of his charge?"—"A bad means, sire."

"The good—the good, then?"—"Ruin him, sire, that is the way."

"But how?"

"Occasions will not be wanting; take advantage of all occasions."

"Point them out to me."

"Here is one at once. His royal highness Monsieur is about to be married, his nuptials must be magnificent. That is a good occasion for

your majesty to demand a million of M. Fouquet. M. Fouquet, w pays twenty thousand livres down when he need not pay more th five thousand, will easily find that million when your majesty shall dema it."

"That is all very well ; I will demand it," said Louis.

"If your majesty will sign the *ordonnance*, I will have the money tak myself." And Colbert pushed a paper before the king, and present pen to him.

At that moment the usher opened the door and announced monsieur surintendant. Louis turned pale. Colbert let the pen fall, and drew with from the king, over whom he extended his black wings of a bad angel. The surintendant made his entrance like a man of the court, to whom single glance was sufficient to make him appreciate his situation. The situation was not very encouraging for Fouquet, whatever might be the consciousness of his strength. The small black eye of Colbert, dilated by envy, and the limpid eye of Louis XIV., inflamed by anger, signalled pressing danger. Courtiers are, with regard to court rumours, like o soldiers, who distinguish through blasts of wind and moaning of leave the sound of the distant steps of an armed troop. They can, after having listened, tell pretty nearly how many men are marching, how many arms resound, how many cannons roll. Fouquet had then only to interrogate the silence which his arrival had produced ; he found it big with menacing revelations. The king allowed him quite time enough to advance as far as the middle of the chamber. His adolescent modesty commanded the forbearance of the moment. Fouquet boldly seized the opportunity.

"Sire," said he, "I was impatient to see your majesty."

"What for," asked Louis.

"To announce some good news to you."

Colbert, the grandeur of person, less largeness of heart, resembled Fouquet in many points. The same penetration, the same knowledge of men. Moreover, that great power of contraction, which gives to hypocrites time to reflect, and gather themselves up to take a spring. He guessed that Fouquet was going to meet the blow he was about to deal him. His eyes sparkled.

"What news?" asked the king. Fouquet placed a roll of papers on the table.

"Let your majesty have the goodness to cast your eyes over this work," said he. The king slowly unfolded the paper.

"Plans?" said he—"Yes, sire."

"And what are these plans?"—"A new fortification, sire."

"Ah, ah!" said the king, "you amuse yourself with tactics and strategies then, M. Fouquet?"

"I occupy myself with everything that may be useful to the reign of your majesty," replied Fouquet.

"Beautiful descriptions!" said the king, looking at the design.

"Your majesty comprehends, without doubt," said Fouquet, bending over the paper ; "here is the circle of the walls, here are the forts, the advanced works."

"And what do I see here, monsieur?"—"The sea."

"The sea all round?"—"Yes, sire."

"And what is then this place of which you show me the plan?"

"Sire, it is Belle-Isle-en-Mer," replied Fouquet with simplicity.

At this word, at this name, Colbert made so marked a movement, that the king turned round to enforce the necessity for reserve. Fouquet did

not appear to be the least in the world concerned by the Colbert, or the king's signal.

"Monsieur," continued Louis, "you have then fortified Belle-

"Yes, sire; and I have brought the plan and the accounts to your majesty," replied Fouquet; "I have expended sixteen hundred livres in this operation."

"What to do?" replied Louis coldly, having taken the initial malicious look of the intendant.

"For an aim very easy to seize," replied Fouquet. "Your majesty will treat on cool terms with Great Britain."

"Yes; but since the restoration of King Charles II. I have formed an alliance with him."

"A month since, sire, your majesty has truly said; but it is more than six months since the fortifications of Belle-Isle have been begun."

"Then they have become useless."

"Sire, fortifications are never useless. I fortified Belle-Isle with M. Monk and Lambert, and all those London citizens who were paid soldiers. Belle-Isle will be ready fortified against the Dutch, against either England or your majesty cannot fail to make war."

The king was again silent, and looked under at Colbert. "Believe me," added Louis, "is yours, M. Fouquet?"—"No sire."

"Whose then?"—"Your majesty's."

Colbert was seized with as much terror as if a gulf had opened beneath his feet. Louis started with admiration, either at the genius or the devotion of Fouquet.

"Explain yourself, monsieur," said he.

"Nothing more easy, sire; Belle-Isle is one of my estates; I have fortified it at my own expense. But as nothing in the world can oppose a subject making an humble present to his king, I offer your majesty the proprietorship of the estate, of which you will leave me the usufruct. Belle-Isle, as a place of war, ought to be occupied by the king. Your majesty will be able, henceforth, to keep a safe garrison there."

Colbert felt almost sinking down upon the floor. To keep himself from falling, he was obliged to hold by the columns of the wainscoting.

"This is a piece of great skill in the art of war that you have exhibited, monsieur," said Louis.

"Sire, the initiative did not come from me," replied Fouquet; "many persons have inspired me with it. The plans themselves have been made by one of the most distinguished engineers."

"His name?"—"M. du Valon."

"M. du Valon?" resumed Louis, "I do not know him. It is much to be lamented, M. Colbert," continued he, "that I do not know the names of the men of talent who do honour to my reign." And while saying these words he turned towards Colbert. The latter felt himself crushed, sweat flowed from his brow, no word presented itself to his lips, he uttered an inexpressible martyrdom. "You will recollect that name," said Louis XIV.

Colbert bowed, but was paler than his ruffles of Flemish lace. Fouquet continued:

"The masonries are of Roman *mastic*; the architects have composed it after the best accounts of antiquity."

"And the cannons?" asked Louis.

"Oh! sire, that concerns your majesty; it did not become me to place cannon in my own house, unless your majesty had told me it was yours."

to float, undetermined between the hatred which this so inspired him with, and the pity he felt for that other man, who seemed to him the counterfeit of the former. But the sense of his kingly duty prevailed over the feelings of the stretched out his finger to the paper.

"I have cost you a great deal of money to carry these plans into," said he.

"I have the honour of telling your majesty the amount?"

"At it, if you please, I have forgotten it."

"Ten hundred thousand livres."

"Ten hundred thousand livres? you are enormously rich, mon-

"Is your majesty who is rich, since Belle-Isle is yours."

"Thank you; but however rich I may be, M. Fouquet——" The

"Stopped——" Well, sire?" asked the surintendant.

"I foresee the moment when I shall want money."

"You sire?—And at what moment, then?"

"To-morrow, for example."

"Will your majesty do me the honour to explain yourself?"

"My brother is going to marry the Princess of England."

"Well?—sire."

"Well, I ought to give the young princess a reception worthy of the granddaughter of Henry IV."

"That is but just, sire."

"Then I shall want money."——"No doubt."

"I shall want——" Louis hesitated. The sum he was going to demand was the same that he had been obliged to refuse Charles II. He turned towards Colbert, that he might give the blow.

"I shall want, to-morrow," repeated he, looking at Colbert.

"A million," said the latter, bluntly, delighted to take his revenge. Fouquet turned his back upon the intendant to listen to the king. He did not at all turn round, but waited till the king repeated, or rather murmured, "A million."

"Oh, sire," replied Fouquet disdainfully, "a million! What will your majesty do with a million?"

"It appears to me, nevertheless——" said Louis XIV.

"That is not more than is spent at the nuptials of one of the most powerful princes of Germany."

"Monsieur!"

"Your majesty must have two millions at least. The horses alone would run away with five hundred thousand livres. I shall have the honour of sending your majesty sixteen hundred thousand livres this evening."

"How!" said the king, "sixteen hundred thousand livres?"

"Look, sire," replied Fouquet, without even turning towards Colbert. "I know that that wants four hundred thousand livres of the two million. But this monsieur of *l'intendance*" (pointing over his shoulder to Colbert who, if possible, became paler, behind him) "has in his coffers nine hundred thousand livres of mine."

The king turned round to look at Colbert.

"But——" said the latter.

"Monsieur," continued Fouquet, still speaking indirectly to Colbert, "monsieur has received, a week ago, sixteen hundred thousand livres; he has paid a hundred thousand livres to the guards, sixty-four thousand livres

to the hospitals, twenty-five thousand to the Swiss, a hundred and thirty thousand to provisions, a thousand for arms, ten thousand for incidental expenses. I do not err, then, in reckoning upon nine hundred thousand livres that are left." Then turning towards Colbert, like a disdainful head of office towards his inferior, "Take care, monsieur," said he, "that those nine hundred thousand livres be remitted to his majesty this evening, in gold."

"But," said the king, "that will make two millions five hundred thousand livres."

"Sire, the five hundred thousand livres over may serve as pocket money for his royal highness. You understand, Monsieur Colbert, this evening, before eight o'clock."

And with these words, bowing respectfully to the king, the surintendant made his exit backwards, without honouring with a single look the envious man whose head he had just half-shaved.

Colbert tore his ruffles to pieces in his rage, and bit his lips till they bled.

Fouquet had not passed the door of the cabinet, when an usher, pushing by him, exclaimed, "A courier from Bretagne for his majesty."

"M. d'Herblay was right," murmured Fouquet, pulling out his watch : "an hour and fifty-five minutes. It was quite true."

## CHAPTER LXXVI.

IN WHICH D'ARTAGNAN FINISHES BY AT LENGTH PLACING HIS HAND UPON HIS CAPTAIN'S COMMISSION.

THE reader guesses beforehand whom the usher announced in announcing the messenger from Bretagne. This messenger was easily recognised. It was D'Artagnan, his clothes dusty, his face inflamed, his hair dripping with sweat, his legs stiff ; he lifted his feet painfully the height of each step, upon which resounded the ring of his bloody spurs. He perceived, in the doorway he was passing through, the surintendant coming out. Fouquet bowed with a smile to him who, an hour before, was bringing him ruin and death. D'Artagnan found in his goodness of heart, and in his inexhaustible vigour of body, enough presence of mind to remember the kind reception of this man ; he bowed then, also, much more from benevolence and compassion than from respect. He felt upon his lips the word which had so many times been repeated to the Duc de Guise—"Fly !" But to pronounce that word would have been to betray his cause ; to speak that word in the cabinet of the king, and before an usher, would have been to ruin himself gratuitously, and could save nobody. D'Artagnan, then, contented himself with bowing to Fouquet, and entered. At this moment the king floated between the joy the last words of Fouquet had given him, and his pleasure at the return of D'Artagnan. Without being a courtier, D'Artagnan had a glance as sure and as rapid as if he had been one. He read, on his entrance, devouring humiliation on the countenance of Colbert. He even heard the king say these words to him :

"Ah, Monsieur Colbert, you have, then, nine hundred thousand livres at the *intendance* ?" Colbert, suffocated, bowed, but made no reply. All this scene entered into the mind of D'Artagnan, by the eyes and ears, at once. The first word of Louis to his musketeer, as if he wished it to be in opposition to what he was saying at the moment, was a kind "Good-day ;" his second was to send away Colbert. The latter left the king's

cabinet livid and tottering, whilst D'Artagnan twisted up the ends of his moustache.

"I love to see one of my servants in this disorder," said the king, admiring the martial stains upon the clothes of his envoy.

"I thought, sire, my presence at the Louvre was sufficiently urgent to excuse my presenting myself thus before you."

"You bring me great news, then, monsieur?"

"Sire, the thing is this, in two words: Belle-Isle is fortified, admirably fortified; Belle-Isle has a double *enceinte*, a citadel, two detached forts; its ports contain three corsairs, and the side-batteries only wait for their cannon."

"I know all that, monsieur," replied the king.

"What! your majesty knows all that?" replied the musketeer, stupefied.

"I have the plan of the fortifications of Belle-Isle," said the king.

"Your majesty has the plan?"—"Here it is."

"It is really it, sire; and I saw a similar one on the spot."

The brow of D'Artagnan became clouded. "Ah! I understand all. Your majesty has not trusted to me alone, but has sent some other person," said he, in a reproachful tone.

"Of what importance is the manner, monsieur, in which I have learned what I know, so that I do know it?"

"Sire, sire," said the musketeer, without seeking even to conceal his dissatisfaction; "but I must be permitted to say to your majesty, that it is not worth while to make me use such speed, to risk twenty times the breaking of my neck, to salute me on my arrival with such intelligence. Sire, when people are not trusted, or are deemed insufficient, they should not be employed." And D'Artagnan, with a movement perfectly military, stamped with his foot, and left upon the floor dust stained with blood. The king looked at him, inwardly enjoying his first triumph.

"Monsieur," said he, at the expiration of a minute, "not only is Belle-Isle known to me, but, still further, Belle-Isle is mine."

"That is well! that is well, sire, I ask no more," replied D'Artagnan.

"My discharge."

"What! your discharge?"

"Without doubt. I am too proud to eat the bread of the king without gaining it, or rather by gaining it badly.—My discharge, sire!"

"Oh, oh!"—"I ask for my discharge, or I shall take it."

"You are angry, monsieur?"

"I have reason—*mordioux*! I am thirty-two hours in the saddle, I ride night and day, I perform prodigies of speed, I arrive stiff as the corpse of a man who has been hung—and another arrives before me! Come, sire, I am a fool!—My discharge, sire!"

"Monsieur D'Artagnan," said Louis, leaning his white hand upon the dusty arm of the musketeer, "what I tell you will not at all affect that which I promised you. A word given, a word should be kept." And the king, going straight to his table, opened a drawer and took out a folded paper. "Here is your commission of captain of musketeers; you have won it, Monsieur D'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan opened the paper eagerly, and looked at it twice. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

"And this commission is given you," continued the king, "not only on account of your journey to Belle-Isle, but, moreover, for your brave intervention at the Place de Grève. There, likewise, you served me valiantly."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan, without his self-command being able to

prevent a certain redness mounting to his eyes—"you know that also, sire?"

"Yes, I know it."

The king possessed a piercing glance, and an infallible judgment, when it was his object to read a conscience. "You have something to say." said he to the musketeer, "something to say which you do not say. Come, speak freely, monsieur; you know that I told you, once for all, that you are to be quite frank with me."

"Well, sire! what I have to say is this, that I would prefer being made captain of musketeers for having charged a battery at the head of my company or taken a city, than for causing two wretches to be hung."

"Is that quite true that you tell me?"

"And why should your majesty suspect me of dissimulation, I ask?"

"Because I know you well, monsieur; you cannot repent of having drawn your sword for me."

"Well, in that your majesty is deceived, and greatly; yes, I do repent of having drawn my sword on account of the results that action produced; the poor men who were hung, sire, were neither your enemies nor mine; and they could not defend themselves."

The king preserved silence for a moment. "And your companion, M. d'Artagnan, does he partake of your repentance?"

"My companion?"

"Yes, you were not alone, I have been told."

"Alone, where?"—"At the Place de Grève."

"No, sire, no!" said D'Artagnan, blushing at the idea that the king might have a suspicion that he, D'Artagnan, had wished to engross to himself all the glory that belonged to Raoul; "no, *mordoux*! and as your majesty says, I had a companion, and a good companion, too."

"A young man?"—"Yes, sire, a young man. Oh! your majesty must accept my compliments, you are as well informed of things out of doors as with things within. It is M. Colbert who makes all these fine reports to the king."

"M. Colbert had said nothing but good of you, M. d'Artagnan, and he would have met with a bad reception if he had come to tell me anything else."

"That is fortunate."

"But he also said much good of that young man."

"And with justice," said the musketeer.

"In short, it appears that this young man is a brave," said Louis, in order to sharpen the sentiment which he mistook for envy.

"A brave! Yes, sire," repeated D'Artagnan, delighted on his part to direct the king's attention to Raoul.

"Do you not know his name?"—"Well, I think——"

"You know him then?"

"I have known him nearly five-and-twenty years, sire."

"Why, he is scarcely twenty-five years old!" cried the king.

"Well, sire, I have known him ever since his birth, that is all."

"Do you affirm that?"

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "your majesty questions me with a mistrust in which I recognise another character than your own. M. Colbert, who has so well informed you, has he not forgotten to tell you that this young man is the son of my most intimate friend?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne is?"

"Certainly, sire. The father of the Vicomte de Bragelonne is M. le

Comte de la Fère, who so powerfully assisted in the restoration of King Charles II. Bragelonne is of a valiant race, sire."

"Then he is the son of that nobleman who came to me, or rather to M. Mazarin, on the part of King Charles II., to offer me his alliance?"

"Exactly, sire."

"And the Comte de la Fère is a brave, say you?"

"Sire, he is a man who has drawn his sword more times for the king, your father, than there are, at present, days in the happy life of your majesty."

It was Louis XIV. who now bit his lip in his turn.

"That is well, M. d'Artagnan, very well! And M. le Comte de la Fère is your friend, say you?"

"For about forty years; yes, sire. Your majesty may see that I do not speak to you of yesterday."

"Should you be glad to see this young man, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Delighted, sire."

The king touched his bell, and an usher appeared. "Call M. de Bragelonne," said the king.

"Ah! ah! he is here?" said D'Artagnan.

"He is on guard to-day, at the Louvre, with the company of the gentlemen of monsieur le prince."

The king had scarcely ceased speaking, when Raoul presented himself, and, on seeing D'Artagnan, smiled on him with that charming smile which is only found upon the lips of youth.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, familiarly, to Raoul, "the king will allow you to embrace me; only tell his majesty you thank him."

Raoul bowed so gracefully, that Louis, to whom all superior qualities were pleasing when they did not affect anything against his own, admired his beauty, strength, and modesty.

"Monsieur," said the king, addressing Raoul, "I have asked monsieur le prince to be kind enough to give you up to me; I have received his reply, and you belong to me from this morning. Monsieur le prince was a good master, but I hope you will not lose by the change."

"Yes, yes, Raoul, be satisfied; the king has some good in him," said D'Artagnan, who had fathomed the character of Louis, and who played with his self-love within certain limits; always observing, be it understood, the proprieties, and flattering, even when he appeared to be bantering.

"Sire," said Bragelonne, with a voice soft and musical, and with the natural and easy elocution he inherited from his father; "Sire, it is not from to-day that I belong to your majesty."

"Oh! no, I know," said the king, "you mean your enterprise of the Grève. That day you were truly mine, monsieur."

"Sire, it is not of that day I would speak; it would not become me to refer to so paltry a service in the presence of such a man as M. d'Artagnan. I would speak of a circumstance which created an epoch in my life, and which consecrated me, from the age of sixteen, to the devoted service of your majesty."

"Ah! ah!" said the king, "what is that circumstance? Tell me, monsieur."

"This is it, sire.—When I was setting out on my first campaign, that is to say, to join the army of monsieur le prince, M. le Comte de la Fère came to conduct me as far as Saint-Denis, where the remains of King Louis XIII. wait, upon the lowest steps of the funereal *basilique*, a successor, whom God will not send him, I hope, for many years. Then he

made me swear upon the ashes of our masters, to serve royalty, represented by you—incarnate in you, sire—to serve it in word, in thought, and in action. I swore, and God and the dead were witnesses to my oath. During ten years, sire, I have not so often as I desired had occasion to keep it. I am a soldier of your majesty, and nothing else; and, on calling me nearer to you, I do not change my master, I only change my garrison."

Raoul was silent, and bowed. Louis still listened after he had done speaking.

"*Mordieux !*" cried D'Artagnan, "that is well spoken! is it not, your majesty? A good race! a noble race!"

"Yes," murmured the agitated king, without, however, daring to manifest his emotion, for it had no other cause than the contact with a nature eminently aristocratic. "Yes, monsieur, you say truly;—wherever you were, you were the king's. But in changing your garrison, believe me, you will find an advancement of which you are worthy."

Raoul saw that there stopped what the king had to say to him. And with the perfect tact which characterised his refined nature, he bowed and retired.

"Is there anything else, monsieur, of which you have to inform me?" said the king, when he found himself again alone with D'Artagnan.

"Yes, sire, and I kept that news for the last, for it is sad, and will clothe European royalty in mourning."

"What do you tell me?"

"Sire, in passing through Blois, a word, a sad word, echoed from the palace, struck my ear."

"In truth you terrify me, M. d'Artagnan!"

"Sire, this word was pronounced to me by a *piqueur*, who wore a crape on his arm."

"My uncle, Gaston of Orleans, perhaps?"

"Sire, he has rendered his last sigh."

"And I was not warned of it!" cried the king, whose royal susceptibility saw an insult in the absence of this intelligence.

"Oh! do not be angry, sire," said D'Artagnan; "neither the couriers of Paris, nor the couriers of the whole world, can travel with your servant; the courier from Blois will not be here these two hours, and he rides well, assure you, seeing that I only passed him on the other side of Orleans."

"My uncle Gaston," murmured Louis, pressing his hand to his brow, and comprising in those three words all that his memory recalled of that name of opposite sentiments.

"Eh! yes, sire, it is thus," said D'Artagnan, philosophically replying to the royal thought, "it is thus the past flies away."

"That is true, monsieur, that is true; but there remains for us, thank God! the future; and we will try to make it not too dark."

"I feel confidence in your majesty on that head," said D'Artagnan, bowing, "and now——"

"You are right, monsieur; I had forgotten the hundred leagues you have just ridden. Go, monsieur, take care of one of the best of soldiers, and when you have reposed a little, come and place yourself at my orders."

"Sire, absent or present, I always am so."

D'Artagnan bowed and retired. Then, as if he had only come from Fontainebleau, he quickly traversed the Louvre to rejoin Bragelonne.

## CHAPTER LXXVII.

## A LOVER AND A MISTRESS.

WHILST the wax-lights were burning in the castle of Blois, around the inanimate body of Gaston of Orleans, that last representative of the past whilst the *bourgeois* of the city were making his epitaph, which was far from being a panegyric ; whilst madame the dowager, no longer remembering that in her young days she had loved that senseless corpse to such a degree as to fly the paternal palace for his sake, was making, within twenty paces of the funeral apartment, her little calculations of interest and her little sacrifices of pride ; other interests and other prides were in agitation in all the parts of the castle into which a living soul could penetrate. Neither the lugubrious sound of the bells, nor the voice of the chanters, nor the splendour of the wax-lights through the windows, nor the preparations for the funeral, had the power to divert the attention of two persons, placed at a window of the interior court—a window that we are acquainted with, and which lightened a chamber forming part of what were called the little apartments. For the rest, a joyous beam of the sun, for the sun appeared to care very little for the loss France had just suffered ; a sunbeam, we say, descended upon them, drawing perfumes from the neighbouring flowers, and animating the walls themselves. These two persons, so occupied, not by the death of the *duc*, but by the conversation which was the consequence of that death, these two persons were a young woman and a young man. The latter personage, a man of from twenty-five to twenty-six years of age, with mien sometimes lively and sometimes dull, making good use of two immensely large eyes, shaded with long eyelashes, was short of stature and brown of skin ; he smiled with an enormous, but well furnished mouth and his pointed chin, which appeared to enjoy a mobility which nature does not ordinarily grant to that portion of the countenance, leant from time to time very lovingly towards his interlocutrix, who, we must say, did not always draw back so rapidly as strict propriety had a right to require. The young girl—we know her, for we have already seen her, at that very same window, by the light of that same sun—the young girl presented a singular mixture of slyness and reflection ; she was charming when she laughed, beautiful when she became serious ; but, let us hasten to say she was more frequently charming than beautiful. The two persons appeared to have attained the culminating point of a discussion—half-battering, half-serious.

“Now, Monsieur Malicorne,” said the young girl, “does it, at length please you that we should talk reasonably?”

“You believe that that is very easy, Mademoiselle Aure,” replied the young man.

“To do what we like, when we can only do what we are able——”

“Good !” said the young man ; “there she is bewildered in her phrases.”

“Who, I?”——“Yes, you ; leave that lawyers’ logic, my dear.”

“Another impossibility.”

“Clerk, I am Mademoiselle de Montalais.”

“Demoiselle, I am Monsieur Malicorne.”

“Alas, I know it well, and you overwhelm me by distance ; so I will say no more to you.”

“Well, but, no, I don’t overwhelm you ; say what you have to tell me—say it, I insist upon it.”——“Well, I obey you.”

"That is truly fortunate."—"Monsieur is dead."

"Ah, *peste* ! there's news ! And where do you come from, to be able to tell us that ?"

"I come from Orleans, mademoiselle."

"And is that all the news you bring ?"

"Ah, no ; I am come to tell you that Madame Henrietta of England is coming to marry his majesty's brother."

"Indeed, Malicorne, you are insupportable with your news of the last century. Now, mind, if you persist in this bad habit of laughing at people, I will have you turned out."

"Oh !"—"Yes : for really you exasperate me."

"There, there. Patience, mademoiselle."

"You want to make yourself of consequence ; I know well enough why. So !"

"Tell me, and I will answer you frankly, yes, if the thing be true."

"You know that I am anxious to have that commission of lady of honour, which I have been foolish enough to ask of you, and you do not use your credit."

"Who, I ?" Malicorne cast down his eyes, joined his hands, and assumed his sullen air. "And what credit can the poor clerk of a procureur have, pray ?"

"Your father has not twenty thousand livres a year for nothing, M. Malicorne."

"A provincial fortune, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Your father is not in the secrets of monsieur le prince for nothing."

"An advantage which is confined to lending monseigneur money."

"In a word, you are not the most cunning young fellow in the province for nothing ?"—"You flatter me."

"Who, I ?"—"Yes, you."

"How so ?"—"Since I maintain that I have no credit, and you maintain I have."

"Well, then,—my commission ?"—"Well—your commission ?"

"Shall I have it, or shall I not ?"—"You shall have it."

"Ay, but when ?"—"When you like."

"Where is it then ?"—"In my pocket."

"How—in your pocket ?"—"Yes." And, with a smile, Malicorne drew from his pocket a letter, upon which Montalais seized as a prey, and which she read with avidity. As she read, her face brightened.

"A 'Malicorne,' cried she, after having read it, 'in truth, you are a good lad.'"

"What for, mademoiselle ?"

"Because you might have been paid for this commission, and you have not." And she burst into a loud laugh, thinking to put the clerk out of countenance ; but Malicorne sustained the attack bravely.

"I do not understand you," said he. It was now Montalais who was disconcerted in her turn. "I have declared my sentiments to you," continued Malicorne. "You have told me three times, laughing all the while, that you did not love me ; you have embraced me once without laughing, and that is all I want."

"All ?" said the proud and coquettish Montalais, in a tone through which wounded pride was visible.

"Absolutely all, mademoiselle," replied Malicorne.

"Ah !"—And this monosyllable indicated as much anger as the young man might have expected gratitude. He shook his head quietly.

"Listen, Montalais," said he, without heeding whether that familiarity pleased his mistress or not ; "let us not dispute about it."

"And why not?"

"Because during the year which I have known you, you might have had me turned out of doors twenty times if I did not please you."

"Indeed ; and on what account should I have had you turned out?"

"Because I have been sufficiently impertinent for that."

"Oh, that,—yes, that's true."

"You see plainly that you are forced to avow it," said Malicorne.

"Monsieur Malicorne !"

"Don't let us be angry ; if you have retained me, then, it has not been without cause."

"It is not, at least, because I love you," cried Montalais.

"Granted. I will even say that, at this moment, I am certain that you execrate me."

"Oh, you have never spoken so truly."

"Well, on my part, I detest you."

"Ah, I take the act."

"Take it. You find me brutal and foolish ; on my part I find you with a harsh voice, and your face distorted with anger. At this moment you would allow yourself to be thrown out of that window rather than allow me to kiss the tip of your finger ;—I would precipitate myself from the top of the balcony rather than touch the hem of your robe. But, in five minutes you will love me, and I shall adore you. Oh, it is just so."

"I doubt it."—"And I swear it."

"Coxcomb !"—"And then, that is not the true reason. You stand in need of me, Aure, and I of you. When it pleases you to be gay, I make you laugh ; when it suits me to be loving, I look at you. I have given you a commission of lady of honour which you wished for ; you will give me presently, something I wish for."

"I will?"—"Yes, you will ; but, at this moment, my dear Aure, declare to you that I wish for absolutely nothing ; so be at ease."

"You are a frightful man, Malicorne ; I was going to rejoice at getting this commission, and thus you take away all my joy."

"Good ; there is no time lost,—you will rejoice when I am gone."

"Go, then ; and after——"

"So be it ; but, in the first place, a piece of advice."—"What is it?"

"Resume your good humour,—you are ugly when you pout."

"Coarse !"

"Come, let us tell our truths to each other, while we are about it."

"Oh, Malicorne ! Bad-hearted man !"

"Oh, Montalais ! Ungrateful girl !"

The young man leant with his elbow upon the window-frame ;—Montalais took a book and opened it. Malicorne stood up, brushed his hat with his sleeve, smoothed down his black *fourpoint* ;—Montalais, though pretending to read, looked at him out of the corner of her eye.

"Good !" cried she, quite furious ; "he has assumed his respectful air—and he will pout for a week."

"A fortnight, mademoiselle," said Malicorne, bowing.

Montalais lifted up her little doubled fist. "Monster !" said she ; "oh ! that I were a man !"

"What would you do to me?"—"I would strangle you."

"Ah ! very well, then," said Malicorne ; "I believe I begin to desire something."

"And what do you desire, Monsieur Demon? That I should lose my soul from anger?"

Malicorne was rolling his hat respectfully between his fingers; but, all at once, he let fall his hat, seized the young girl by the two shoulders, pulled her towards him, and applied to her lips two other very warm lips for a man pretending to so much indifference. Aure would have cried out, but the cry was stifled in the kiss. Nervous and, apparently, angry, the young girl pushed Malicorne against the wall.

"Good!" said Malicorne, philosophically, "that's enough for six weeks. Adieu, mademoiselle, accept my very humble salutation." And he made three steps towards the door.

"Well! no,—you shall not go!" cried Montalais, stamping with her left foot. "Stay where you are! I order you!"

"You order me?"—"Yes; am I not mistress?"

"Of my heart and soul, without doubt."

"A pretty property! *ma foi!* The soul is silly and the heart dry."

"Beware, Montalais, I know you," said Malicorne; "you are going to fall in love with your humble servant."

"Well, yes!" said she, hanging round his neck with childish indolence, rather than with loving abandonment. "Well, yes! for I must thank you, at least."

"And for what?"

"For the commission; is it not my whole future?"

"And all mine." Montalais looked at him.

"It is frightful," said she, "that one can never guess whether you are speaking seriously or not."

"I cannot speak more seriously. I was going to Paris,—you are going there,—we are going there."

"And so it was for that motive only you have served me; selfish fellow!"

"What would you have me say, Aure? I cannot live without you."

"Well! in truth, it is just so with me; you are, nevertheless, it must be confessed, a very bad-hearted young man."

"Aure, my dear Aure, take care! if you take to calling names again, you will know the effect they produce upon me, and I shall adore you." And so saying, Malicorne drew the young girl a second time towards him. But at that instant a step resounded on the staircase. The young people were so close, that they would have been surprised in the arms of each other, if Montalais had not violently pushed Malicorne, with his back against the door, just then opening. A loud cry, followed by angry reproaches, immediately resounded. It was Madame de Saint-Remy who uttered the cry and proffered the angry words. The unlucky Malicorne almost crushed her between the wall and the door she was coming in at.

"It is again that good-for-nothing!" cried the old lady. "Always here!"

"Ah, madame!" replied Malicorne, in a respectful tone; "it is eight long days since I was here,"

## CHAPTER LXXVIII.

IN WHICH WE AT LENGTH SEE THE TRUE HEROINE OF THIS  
HISTORY APPEAR.

BEHIND Madame de Saint-Remy came up Mademoiselle de la Vallière. She heard the explosion of maternal anger, and as she divined the cause of it, she entered the chamber trembling, and perceived the unlucky Mali-

corne, whose woeful countenance might have softened or set laughing whoever might have observed it coolly. He had promptly intrenched himself behind a large chair, as if to avoid the first attacks of Madame de Saint-Remy; he had no hopes of prevailing with words, for she spoke louder than he, and without stopping; but he reckoned upon the eloquence of his gestures. The old lady would neither listen to nor see anything. Malicorne had long been one of her antipathies. But her anger was too great not to overflow from Malicorne on to his accomplice. Montalais had her turn.

"And you, mademoiselle; and you, may you not be certain I shall inform madame of what is going on in the apartment of one of her ladies of honour?"

"Oh, dear mother!" cried Mademoiselle de la Vallière, "for mercy's sake, spare——"

"Hold your tongue, mademoiselle, and do not uselessly trouble yourself to intercede for unworthy subjects; that a young maid of honour like you should be subjected to a bad example is, certes, a misfortune great enough; but that you should sanction it by your indulgence is what I will not allow."

"But in truth," said Montalais, rebelling again, "I do not know upon what pretence you treat me thus. I am doing no harm, I suppose?"

"And that great good-for-nothing, mademoiselle," resumed Madame de Saint-Remy, pointing to Malicorne—"is he here to do any good, I ask you?"

"He is neither here for good nor harm, madame; he comes to see me—that is all."

"It is all very well—all very well!" said the old lady. "Her royal highness shall be informed of it, and she will judge."

"At all events, I do not see why," replied Montalais, "it should be forbidden that M. Malicorne should have intentions towards me, if his intentions are honourable."

"Honourable intentions with such a face!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy.

"I thank you, in the name of my face, madame," said Malicorne.

"Come, my daughter, come," continued Madame de Saint-Remy; "I will go and inform madame that, at the very moment she is weeping for her husband, at the moment when we are all weeping for a master in this old castle of Blois, the abode of grief, there are people who amuse themselves with rejoicing."

"Oh!" cried both the accused, with one voice.

"A maid of honour! a maid of honour!" cried the old lady, lifting her hands towards heaven.

"Well, it is that in which you are mistaken, madame," said Montalais, highly exasperated; "I am no longer a maid of honour—of madame's, at least."

"Have you given in your resignation, mademoiselle? That is well! I cannot but applaud such a determination, and I do applaud it."

"I do not give in my resignation, madame; I take another service—that is all."

"In the *bourgeoisie* or in the *robe*?" asked Madame de Saint-Remy, disdainfully.

"Please to learn, madame, that I am not a girl to serve either *bourgeoise* or *robines*; and that, instead of the miserable court at which you vegetate, I am going to reside in a court almost royal."

"Ah, ah! a royal court!" said Madame de Saint-Remy, forcing a laugh—"a royal court! What think you of that, my daughter?"

And she turned round towards Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whom she would by main force have dragged away from Montalais, and who, instead of obeying the impulse of Madame de Saint-Remy, looked first at her mother and then at Montalais with her beautiful conciliatory eyes.

"I did not say a royal court, madame," replied Montalais; "because Madame Henrietta, of England, who is about to become the wife of S. A. R. Monsieur, is not a queen. I said almost royal, and I spoke correctly, since she will be sister-in-law to the king."

A thunderbolt falling upon the castle of Blois would not have astonished Madame de Saint-Remy as did the last sentence of Montalais.

"What do you say of Son Altesse Royale Madame Henrietta?" stammered out the old lady.

"I say I am going to belong to her household, as maid of honour; that is what I say."

"As maid of honour!" cried, at the same time, Madame de Saint-Remy with despair, and Mademoiselle de la Vallière with delight.

"Yes, madame, as maid of honour."

The old lady's head sunk down as if the blow had been too severe for her; but, almost immediately recovering herself, she launched a last projectile at her adversary.

"Oh, oh!" said she, "I have heard of many of these sorts of promises beforehand, which often lead people to flatter themselves with wild hopes, and at the last moment, when the time comes to keep the promises, and have the hopes realised, they are surprised to see the great credit upon which they reckoned reduced to smoke."

"Oh, madame, the credit of my protector is incontestable, and his promises are as good as acts."

"And would it be indiscreet to ask you the name of this powerful protector?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* no; it is that gentleman there," said Montalais, pointing to Malicorne, who during this scene had preserved the most imperturbable coolness, and the most comic dignity.

"Monsieur!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy, with an explosion of hilarity, "Monsieur is your protector! Is the man whose credit is so powerful, and whose promises are as good as acts, Monsieur Malicorne?"

Malicorne bowed. As to Montalais, as her sole reply, she drew the *brevet* from her pocket, and showed it to the old lady.

"Here is the *brevet*," said she.

At once all was over. As soon as she had cast a rapid glance over this fortunate *brevet*, the good lady clasped her hands, an unspeakable expression of envy and despair contracted her countenance, and she was obliged to sit down to avoid fainting. Montalais was not malicious enough to rejoice extravagantly at her victory, or to overwhelm the conquered enemy, particularly when that enemy was the mother of her friend; she used, then, but did not abuse, her triumph. Malicorne was less generous: he assumed noble *poses* in his *fauteuil*, and stretched himself out with a familiarity which, two hours earlier, would have drawn upon him threats of a caning.

"Maid of honour to the young madame!" repeated Madame de Saint-Remy, still but half convinced.

"Yes, madame, and through the protection of M. Malicorne, moreover."

"It is incredible!" repeated the old lady. "Is it not incredible, Louise?" But Louise did not reply; she was leaning, thoughtful, almost afflicted; passing one hand over her beautiful brow, she sighed heavily.

"Well, but, monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Remy all at once, "how did you manage to obtain this post?"

"I asked for it, madame."

"Of whom?"—"One of my friends."

"And have you friends sufficiently powerful at court to give you such proofs of their credit?"

"*Dame!* it appears so."

"And may one ask the name of these friends?"

"I did not say I had many friends, madame; I said I had one friend."

"And that friend is called?"

"*Peste!* madame, you go too far! When one has a friend as powerful as mine, we do not publish his name in that fashion in open day, in order that he may be stolen from us."

"You are right, monsieur, to be silent as to that name; for I think it would be pretty difficult for you to tell it."

"At all events," said Montalais, "if the friend does not exist, the *brevet* does exist, and that cuts short the question."

"Then I conceive," said Madame de Saint Remy, with the graceful smile of a cat who is going to scratch, "when I found monsieur here now——"

"Well?"—"He brought you the *brevet*."

"Exactly, madame: you have guessed rightly."

"Well, then, nothing can be more moral or proper."

"I think so, madame."

"And I have been wrong, as it appears, in reproaching you, madame, with it."

"Very wrong, madame; but I am so accustomed to your reproaches that I pardon you these."

"In that case, let us be gone, Louise; we have nothing to do but to retire. Well!"—"Madame!" said La Vallière, starting. "did you speak?"

"You do not appear to listen, my child."

"No, madame, I was thinking."

"About what?"—"A thousand things."

"You bear me no ill-will, at least, Louise?" cried Montalais, pressing her hand.

"And why should I, my dear Aure?" replied the girl, in a voice soft as a flute.

"*Dame!*" resumed Madame de Saint Remy; "if she did bear you a little ill-will, poor girl, she could not be much blamed."

"And why should she bear me ill-will, good God?"

"It appears to me that she is of as good a family, and as pretty as you."

"Mother! mother!" cried Louise.

"Prettier a hundred times, madame—not of a better family; but that does not tell me why Louise should bear me ill-will."

"Do you think it will be very amusing for her to be buried alive at Blois, when you are going to shine at Paris?"

"But, madame, it is not I who prevent Louise following me thither; on the contrary, I should certainly be most happy if she came there."

"But it appears that M. Malicorne, who is all-powerful at court——"

"Ah! so much the worse, madame," said Malicorne, "every one for himself in this poor world."

"Malicorne! Malicorne!" said Montalais. Then, stooping towards the young man:—

"Occupy Madame de Saint-Remy, either in disputing with her, or making it up with her ; I must speak to Louise." And, at the same time, a soft pressure of the hand recompensed Malicorne for his future obedience. Malicorne went grumbling towards Madame de Saint-Remy, whilst Montalais said to her friend, throwing one arm round her neck :—

"What is the matter ? Say ? Is it true that you would not love me if I were to shine, as your mother says ?"

"Oh, no !" said the young girl, with difficulty restraining her tears ; "on the contrary, I rejoice at your good fortune."

"Rejoice ! why one would say you are ready to cry !"

"Do people never weep but from envy ?"

"Oh ! yes, I understand ; I am going to Paris, and that word Paris recalls to your mind a certain cavalier——"

"Aure !"——"A certain cavalier who formerly lived near Blois, and who now resides at Paris."

"In truth, I know not what ails me, but I feel stifled."

"Weep, then, weep, as you cannot give me a smile !"

Louise raised her sweet face, which the tears, rolling down one after the other, illumined like diamonds.

"Come, confess," said Montalais.

"What shall I confess ?"

"What makes you weep ; people don't weep without a cause. I am your friend ; whatever you would wish me to do, I will do. Malicorne is more powerful than you would think. Do you wish to go to Paris ?"

"Alas !" sighed Louise.

"Do you wish to come to Paris ?"

"To remain here alone, in this old castle, I, who have enjoyed the delightful habit of listening to your songs, of pressing your hand, of running out the park with you. Oh ! how I shall be *ennuyée* ! how quickly I shall die !"

"Do you wish to come to Paris ?" Louise breathed another sigh.

"You do not answer me."

"What would you that I should answer you ?"

"Yes or no ; that is not very difficult, I think."

"Oh ! you are very fortunate, Montalais !"

"That is to say you would like to be in my place." Louise was silent.

"Little obstinate thing !" said Montalais ; "did ever anyone keep her secrets from her friend thus ? But, confess that you would like to come to Paris ; confess that you are dying with the wish to see Raoul again ?"

"I cannot confess that."——"Then you are wrong."

"Because—— Do you see this *brevet* ?"——"In what way ?"

"To be sure I do."

"Well, I would have made you have a similar one."

"By whose means ?"

"Malicorne's."——"Aure, do you tell the truth ? Is that possible ?"

"*Dame* ! Malicorne is there ; and what he has done for me, he must be sure to do for you."

Malicorne had heard his name pronounced twice ; he was delighted at having an opportunity of coming to a conclusion with Madame de Saint Remy, and he turned round :—

"What is the question, mademoiselle ?"

"Come hither, Malicorne," said Montalais, with an imperious gesture. Malicorne obeyed.

"A *brevet* like this," said Montalais.

"How so?"—"A *brevet* like this ; that is plain enough."

"But——"—"I want one—I must have one!"

"Oh ! oh ! you must have one !"—"Yes."

"It is impossible, is it not, M. Malicorne?" said Louise with her sweet soft voice.

"*Dame !* if it is for you, mademoiselle——"

"For me. Yes, Monsieur Malicorne, it would be for me."

"And if Mademoiselle de Montalais asks it at the same time——"

"Mademoiselle de Montalais does not ask it, she requires it."

"Well ! we will endeavour to obey you, mademoiselle."

"And you will have her named?"—"We will try."

"No evasive reply. Louise de la Vallière shall be maid of honour to Madame Henrietta within a week."—"How you talk !"

"Within a week, or else——"—"Well ! or else !"

"You may take back your *brevet*, Monsieur Malicorne ; I will not leave my friend."—"Dear Montalais !"

"That is right. Keep your *brevet* ; Mademoiselle de la Vallière shall be a maid of honour."

"Is that true?"—"Quite true."

"I may then hope to go to Paris?"—"Depend upon it."

"Oh ! Monsieur Malicorne, what gratitude !" cried Louise, clapping her hands, and bounding with joy.

"Little dissembler !" said Montalais, "try again to make me believe you are not in love with Raoul."

Louise blushed like a rose in June, but instead of replying, she ran and embraced her mother. "Madame," said she, "do you know that M. Malicorne is going to have me appointed maid of honour?"

"M. Malicorne is a prince in disguise," replied the old lady ; "he is all powerful, seemingly."

"Should you also like to be maid of honour?" asked Malicorne of Madame de Saint-Remy. "Whilst I am about it, I might as well get everybody appointed."

And upon that he went away, leaving the poor lady quite disconcerted as Tallemont des Réaux would say.

"Humph !" murmured Malicorne, as he descended the stairs,— "Humph ! there is another note of a thousand livres that will cost me ; but I must get through as well as I can ; my friend Manicamp does nothing for nothing."

## CHAPTER LXXIX.

### MALICORNE AND MANICAMP.

THE introduction of these two new personages into this history, and that mysterious affinity of names and sentiments, merit some attention on the part of the historian and the reader. We will then enter into some details concerning M. Malicorne and M. Manicamp. Malicorne, we know, had made the journey to Orleans in search of the *brevet* destined for Mademoiselle de Montalais, the arrival of which had produced such a strong feeling at the castle of Blois. At that moment M. de Manicamp was at Orleans. A singular personage was this M. de Manicamp ; a very intelligent young fellow, always poor, always needy, although he dipped his hand freely into the purse of M. le Comte de Guiche, one of the best-furnished purses of

period. M. le Comte de Guiche had had as the companion of his boyhood this De Manicamp, a poor gentleman vassal born, of the house of Rammont. M. de Manicamp, with his acuteness, had created himself revenue in the opulent family of the celebrated maréchal. From his fancy, he had, by a calculation much above his age, lent his name and complaisance to the follies of the Comte de Guiche. If his noble companion had stolen some fruit destined for Madame la Maréchale, if he had broken a mirror, or put out a dog's eye, Manicamp declared himself guilty of the crime committed, and received the punishment, which was not so much the more mild for falling upon the innocent. But this was the way in which this system of abnegation was paid for ; instead of wearing such mean habiliments as his paternal fortunes entitled him to, he was able to appear brilliant, superb, like a young noble of fifty thousand livres a year. It was not that he was mean in character or humble in spirit ; no, he was a philosopher, or rather he had the indifference, the apathy, the extravagance which banish from man every feeling of the hierarchical world. His ambition was to spend money. But, in this respect, the worthy M. de Manicamp was a gulf. Three or four times every year he drained the Comte de Guiche, and when the Comte de Guiche was thoroughly ruined, when he had turned out his pockets and his purse before him, then he declared that it would be at least a fortnight before paternal munificence would re-fill those pockets and that purse, De Manicamp lost all his energy, he went to bed, remained there, ate nothing, and sold his handsome clothes, under the pretence that, remaining in bed, he did not want to move. During this prostration of mind and strength, the purse of the Comte de Guiche was getting full again, and when once filled, overflowed to that of De Manicamp, who bought new clothes, dressed himself again, and recommenced the same life he had followed before. This mania of buying his new clothes for a quarter of what they were worth, had rendered De Manicamp hero sufficiently celebrated in Orleans, a city, where, in general, we should be puzzled to say why he came to pass his days of penitence. De Manicamp, a provincial *debauchés, petit-maitres* of six hundred livres a year, shared the expenses of his opulence.

Among the admirers of these splendid toilettes, our friend Malicorne was conspicuous ; he was the son of a syndic of the city, of whom M. de Condé, always needy as a De Condé, often borrowed money at enormous interest. M. Malicorne kept the paternal money chest ; that is to say, in those times of easy morals, he had made for himself, by following the example of his father, and lending at high interest for short terms, a revenue of eighteen hundred livres, without reckoning six hundred others furnished by the generosity of the syndic ; so that Malicorne was the king of the gay youth of Orleans, having two thousand four hundred livres to scatter, squander, and waste on follies of every kind. But, quite contrary to Manicamp, Malicorne was terribly ambitious. He loved distinction ; he spent money from ambition ; and he would have ruined himself from ambition. Malicorne had determined to rise, at whatever price it might cost ; and for this, at whatever price it did cost, he had given himself a mistress and a friend. The mistress, Mademoiselle de Montis, was cruel, as regarded the last favours of love ; but she was of a noble family, and that was sufficient for Malicorne. The friend had no rank, but he was the favourite of the Comte de Guiche, himself the friend of Monsieur, the king's brother ; and that was sufficient for Malicorne. Only, in the chapter of charges, Mademoiselle cost *per an.* :—diamonds, gloves and sweets a thousand livres. De Manicamp cost—money

lent, never returned, from twelve to fifteen hundred livres *per an.* So that there was nothing left for Malicorne. Ah ; yes, we are mistaken ; there was left the paternal strong box. He employed a mode of proceeding, upon which he preserved the most profound secrecy, and which consisted in advancing to himself, from the coffer of the syndic, half a dozen years, that is to say, fifteen thousand livres, swearing to himself—observe, quite to himself—to repay this deficiency as soon as an opportunity should present itself. The opportunity was expected to be the concession of a good post in the household of Monsieur, when that household would be established at the period of his marriage. This period was arrived, and the household was about to be established. A good post in the family of a prince of the blood, when it is given by the credit, and on the recommendation of a friend, like the Comte de Guiche, is worth at least twelve thousand livres *per an.* : and by the means which M. Malicorne had taken to make his revenues fructify, twelve thousand livres might rise to twenty thousand. Then, when once an incumbent of this post, he would marry Mademoiselle de Montalais. Mademoiselle de Montalais, of a family which the woman's side ennobles, not only would be dowered, but would ennoble Malicorne. But, in order that Mademoiselle de Montalais, who had not a large paternal fortune, although an only daughter, should be suitably dowered, it was necessary that she should belong to some great princess, as prodigal as the dowager Madame was covetous. And in order that the wife should not be on one side whilst the husband was on the other, a situation which presents serious inconveniences, particularly with characters like those of the future consorts—Malicorne had imagined the idea of making the central point of union the household of Monsieur the king's brother. Mademoiselle de Montalais would be maid of honour to Madame. Malicorne would be officer to Monsieur.

It is plain the plan was formed by a clear head ; it is plain, also, that it had been bravely executed. Malicorne had asked Manicamp to ask for a *brevet* of maid of honour of the Comte de Guiche ; and the Comte de Guiche had asked this *brevet* of Monsieur, who had signed it without hesitation. The moral plan of Malicorne—for we may well suppose that the combinations of a mind as active as his were not confined to the present but extended to the future—the moral plan of Malicorne, we say, was this :—To obtain entrance into the household of Madame Henrietta, for a woman devoted to himself, who was intelligent, young, handsome, intriguing ; to learn, by means of this woman, all the feminine secrets of the young household ; whilst he, Malicorne, and his friend Manicamp should, between them, know all the male secrets of the young community. It was by these means that a rapid and splendid fortune might be acquired at one and the same time. Malicorne was a vile name ; he who bore it had too much wit to conceal this truth from himself ; but an estate might be purchased ; and Malicorne of some place, or even De Malicorne its name quite short, would sound nobly in the ear.

It was not improbable that a most aristocratic origin might be found for this name of Malicorne ; might it not come from some estate where a dragon with mortal horns had caused some great misfortune, and baptized the soil with the blood it had spilt ? Certes, this plan presented itself before him with difficulties ; but the greatest of all was Mademoiselle de Montalais herself. Capricious, variable, close, giddy, free, prudish, a virgin armed with claws, Erigone stained with grapes, she sometimes overturned with a single dash of her white fingers, or with a single puff from her laughing lips, the edifice which had employed the patience of Malicorne a month to establish.

Love apart, Malicorne was happy, but this love which he could not help feeling, he had the strength to conceal with care, persuaded that at the least relaxing of the ties by which he had bound his Protean female, the demon would overthrow him and laugh at him. He humbled his mistress by disdaining her. Burning with desire, when she advanced to tempt him, he had the heart to appear ice, persuaded that if he opened his arms, she would run away laughing at him. On her side, Montalais believed she did not love Malicorne; whilst, on the contrary, she did love him. Malicorne repeated to her so often his protestation of indifference, that she finished, sometimes, by believing him; and then she believed she detested Malicorne. If she tried to bring him back by coquetry, Malicorne played the coquet better than she could. But what made Montalais hold to Malicorne in an indissoluble fashion was that Malicorne was always come cram full of fresh news brought from the court and the city; it was that Malicorne always brought to Blois a fashion, a secret, or a perfume; it was that Malicorne never asked for a meeting, but, on the contrary, required to be supplicated to receive the favours he burned to obtain. On her side, Montalais was no miser with stories. By her means Malicorne learnt all that passed at Blois, in the family of the dowager Madame; and he related to Manicamp tales that made him ready to die with laughing, which the latter, out of idleness, took ready-made to M. de Guiche, who carried them to Monsieur.

Such, in two words, was the woof of petty interests and petty conspiracies which united Blois with Orleans, and Orleans with Paris; and which was about to bring into the last-named city, where she was to produce so great a revolution, the poor little La Vallière, who was far from suspecting, as she returned joyfully, leaning on the arm of her mother, for what a strange future she was reserved. As to the good man, Malicorne—we speak of the syndic of Orleans—he did not see more clearly into the present than others did into the future; and had no suspicion, as he walked every day, between three and five o'clock, after his dinner, upon the Place Sainte-Catherine, in his grey coat, cut after the fashion of Louis XIII., and his cloth-shoes with great knots of ribbon, that it was he who paid for all those bursts of laughter, all those stolen kisses, all those whisperings, all that ribbonry, and all those bubble projects which formed a chain of forty-five leagues in length, from the palais of Blois to the Palais Royal.

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## CHAPTER LXXX.

### MANICAMP AND MALICORNE.

MALICORNE, then, left Blois, as we have said, and went to find his friend Manicamp, then in temporary retreat in the city of Orleans. It was just at the moment when that young nobleman was employed in selling the last piece of decent clothing he had left. He had, a fortnight before, exported from the Comte de Guiche a hundred pistoles, all he had, to assist in equipping him properly to go and meet Madame, on her arrival at Havre. He had drawn from Malicorne, three days before, fifty pistoles, the price of the *brevet* obtained for Montalais. He had then no expectations from anything else, having exhausted all his resources, with the exception of selling a handsome suit of cloth and satin, all embroidered and laced with gold, which had been the admiration of the court. But to be able to sell this suit, the last he had left,—as we have been forced to confess to the reader—Manicamp had been obliged to take to his bed. No

more fire, no more pocket-money, no more walking-money, nothing but sleep to take the places of repasts, companies, and balls. It has been said—"He who sleeps, dines;" but it has not been said—He who sleeps, plays,—or, He who sleeps, dances. Manicamp, reduced to this extremity of neither playing nor dancing, for a week at least, was, consequently, very sad; he was expecting a usurer, and saw Malicorne enter. A cry of distress escaped him.

"Eh! what!" said he, in a tone which nothing can describe, "is that you again, dear friend?"

"Humph! you are very polite!" said Malicorne.

"Ay; but, look you, I was expecting money, and, instead of the money, I see you come."

"And suppose I brought you some money?"

"Oh, then it is quite another thing. You are very welcome, my dear friend!"

And he held out his hand, not for the hand of Malicorne, but for the purse. Malicorne pretended to be mistaken, and gave him his hand.

"And the money?" said Manicamp.

"My dear friend, if you wish to have it, earn it."

"What must be done for it?"—"Earn it, *parbleu!*"

"And after what fashion?"—"Oh, that is rather trying, I warn you."

"The devil!"

"You must get out of bed, and go immediately to M. le Comte de Guiche."

"I get up!" said Manicamp, stretching himself in his bed voluptuously; "oh, no, thank you!"

"You have, then, sold all your clothes?"

"No; I have one suit left—the handsomest even—but I expect a purchaser."—"And the *chausses*?"

"Well, if you look, you can see them on that chair."

"Very well; since you have some *chausses* and a *pourpoint* left, put your legs into the first and your back into the other, have a horse saddled, and set off."—"Not I."

"And why not?"

"*Morbleu!* don't you know, then, that M. de Guiche is at Etampes?"

"No; I thought he was at Paris. You will then only have fifteen leagues to go, instead of thirty."

"You are a wonderfully clever fellow! If I were to ride fifteen leagues in these clothes, they would never be fit to put on again; and, instead of selling them for thirty pistoles, I should be obliged to take fifteen."

"Sell them for what you like, but I must have a second commission of maid of honour."

"Good! For whom? Is Montalais doubled, then?"

"Vile fellow! It is you who are doubled; you swallow up two fortunes—mine, and that of M. le Comte de Guiche."

"You should say that of M. le Comte de Guiche and yours."

"That is true—honour where it is due; but I return to my *brevet*."

"And you are wrong"—"Prove me that."

"My friend, there will only be twelve maids of honour for madame; I have already obtained for you what twelve hundred women are trying for, and for that I was forced to employ my diplomacy."

"Oh, yes, I know you have been quite heroic, my dear friend."

"We know what we are about," said Manicamp.

"To whom do you tell that? When I am king, I promise you one thing."

"What? To call you Malicorne I.?"

"No; to make you surintendant of my finances. But that is not the question now."

"Unfortunately."

"The present affair is to procure for me a second place of maid of honour."

"My friend, if you were to promise me heaven I would not disturb myself at this moment." Malicorne chinked the money in his pocket.

"There are twenty pistoles here," said Malicorne.

"And what would you do with twenty pistoles, *mon Dieu!*"

"Well," said Malicorne, a little angrily, "suppose I were only to add them to the five hundred you already owe me?"

"You are right," replied Manicamp, stretching out his hand again, "and in that point of view I can accept them. Give them to me."

"An instant. What the devil! it is not only holding out your hand that will do; if I give you the twenty pistoles, shall I have my *brevet*?"

"To be sure you shall."

"Soon?"—"To-day."

"Oh, take care, Monsieur de Manicamp; you undertake much, and I do not ask that. Thirty leagues in a day is too much; you would kill yourself."

"I think nothing impossible when obliging a friend."

"You are quite heroic."

"Where are the twenty pistoles?"

"Here they are," said Malicorne, showing them.

"That's well."—"Yes; but, my dear M. Manicamp, you would consume them in nothing but post-horses."

"No, no; make yourself easy on that head."

"Pardon me; why, it is fifteen leagues from this place to Etampes."

"Fourteen."—"Well, fourteen be it. Fourteen leagues make seven posts, at twenty *sous* the post, seven *livres*; seven *livres* the courier, fourteen; as many for coming back, twenty-eight; as much for bed and supper—that makes sixty of the *livres* which this complaisance would cost you."

Manicamp stretched himself like a serpent in his bed, and, fixing his two great eyes upon Malicorne, "You are right," said he; "I could not return before to-morrow;" and he took the twenty pistoles.

"Now, then, be off!"

"Well, as I cannot be back before to-morrow, we have time."

"Time for what?"—"Time to play."

"What do you wish to play with?"—"Your twenty pistoles, *pardieu!*"

"No; you always win."—"I will wager them, then."

"Against what?"—"Against twenty others."

"And what shall be the object of the wager?"

"This. We have said it was fourteen leagues to go to Etampes?"

"Yes."—"And fourteen leagues back?"—"Doubtless."

"Well, for these twenty-eight leagues you cannot allow less than fourteen hours?"

"That is agreed."

"One hour to find the Comte de Guiche."—"Go on."

"And an hour to persuade him to write a letter to Monsieur."

"Just so."

"Sixteen hours in all."

"You reckon as well as M. Colbert."

"It is now twelve o'clock."—"Half-past."

"*Hein!* you have a handsome watch."

"What were you saying?" said Malicorne, putting his watch quickly back into his fob.

"Ah! true; I was offering to lay you twenty pistoles against these you have lent me, that you will have the Comte de Guiche's letter in——"

"How soon?"—"In eight hours."

"Have you a winged horse, then?"

"That is no matter. Will you lay?"

"I shall have the comte's letter in eight hours?"—"Yes."

"In hand?"—"In hand."

"Well, be it so; I lay," said Malicorne, curious to know how this seller of clothes would get through.

"Is it agreed?"—"It is."

"Pass me the pen, ink, and paper."

"Here they are."—"Thank you."

Manicamp raised himself up with a sigh, and leaning on his left elbow, he, in his best hand, traced the following lines:—

"An order for a place of maid of honour to Madame, which M. le Comte de Guiche will take upon him to obtain at sight.

"DE MANICAMP."

This painful task accomplished, he laid himself down in bed again.

"Well!" asked Malicorne, "what does this mean?"

"That means that if you are in a hurry to have the letter from the Comte de Guiche, for Monsieur, I have won my wager."

"How the devil is that?"

"That is transparent enough, I think; you take that paper."

"Well?"

"And you set out instead of me."—"Ah!"

"You put your horses to their best speed."—"Good!"

"In six hours you will be at Etampes; in seven hours you have the letter from the comte, and I shall have won my wager without stirring from my bed, which suits me and you too, at the same time, I am very sure."

"Decidedly, Manicamp, you are a great man."

"*Hein!* I know that."

"I am to start then for Etampes?"—"Directly."

"I am to go to the Comte de Guiche with this order?"

"He will give you a similar one for Monsieur."

"Monsieur will approve?"—"Instantly."

"And I shall have my *brevet*?"

"You will."—"Ah!"

"Well, I hope I behave genteelly?"

"Adorably."—"Thank you."

"You do as you please, then, with the Comte de Guiche, Malicorne?"

"Except making money of him—everything."

"*Diable!* the exception is annoying; but then, if instead of asking him for money, you were to ask——"

"What?"—"Something important."

"What do you call important?"

"Well! suppose one of your friends asked you to render him a service?"

"I would not render it to him,"

"Selfish fellow !"

"Or at least I would ask him what service he would render me in exchange."

"Ah ! that, perhaps, is fair. Well, that friend speaks to you."

"What, you, Malicorne !"——"Yes ; it is I."

"Ah ! ah ! you are rich then ?"——"I have still fifty pistoles left."

"Exactly the sum I want. Where are those fifty pistoles ?"

"Here," said Malicorne, slapping his pocket.

"Then speak, my friend ; what do you want ?"

Malicorne took up the pen, ink, and paper again, and presented them all to Manicamp. "Write !" said he.——"Dictate !"

"An order for a place in the household of Monsieur."

"Oh !" said Manicamp, laying down the pen, "a place in the household of Monsieur for fifty pistoles ?"

"You mistook me, my friend ; you did not hear plainly."

"What did you say, then ?"——"I said five hundred."

"And the five hundred ?"——"Here they are."

Manicamp devoured the rouleau with his eyes ; but this time Malicorne held it at a distance.

"Eh ! what do you say to that ? Five hundred pistoles."

"I say it is for nothing, my friend," said Manicamp, taking up the pen again, "and you will wear out my credit. Dictate."

Malicorne continued :

"Which my friend the Comte de Guiche will obtain for my friend Malicorne."

"That's it," said Manicamp.

"Pardon me, you have forgotten to sign."

"Ah ! that is true.—The five hundred pistoles ?"

"Here are two hundred and fifty of them."

"And the other two hundred and fifty ?"

"When I shall be in possession of my place."

Manicamp made a face.

"In that case give me the recommendation back again."

"What to do ?"——"To add two words to it."

"Two words ?"——"Yes ; two words only."

"What are they ?"——"In haste."

Malicorne returned the recommendation : Manicamp added the words.

"Good !" said Malicorne, taking back the paper.

Manicamp began to count the pistoles.

"There want twenty," said he.——"How so ?"

"The twenty I have won."——"In what way ?"

"By laying that you would have the letter from the Comte de Guiche in eight hours."

"Ah ! that's fair ;" and he gave him the twenty pistoles.

Manicamp began to take up his gold by handfuls, and pour it down in cascades upon his bed.

"This second place," murmured Malicorne, whilst drying his paper, "which, at the first glance, appears to cost me more than the first, but——"

He stopped, took up the pen in his turn, and wrote to Montalais :

"MADEMOISELLE,—Announce to your friend that her commission will not be long before it arrives ; I am setting out to get it signed ; that will be twenty-eight leagues I shall have gone for the love of you."

Then with his demon's smile, taking up the interrupted sentence :—  
 "This place," said he, "at the first glance, appears to cost more than the first ; but—the benefit will be, I hope, in proportion with the expense, and Mademoiselle de la Vallière will bring me back more than Mademoiselle de Montalais, or else—or else my name is not Malicorne. Farewell, Manicamp ;" and he left the room.

## CHAPTER LXXXI.

### THE COURTYARD OF THE HÔTEL GRAMMONT.

ON Malicorne's arrival at Orleans, he was informed that the Comte de Guiche had just set out for Paris. Malicorne rested himself for a couple of hours, and then prepared to continue his journey. He reached Paris during the night, and alighted at a small hotel, where, in his previous journeys to the capital, he had been accustomed to put up, and at eight o'clock the next morning he presented himself at the Hôtel Grammont. Malicorne arrived just in time, for the Comte de Guiche was on the point of taking leave of Monsieur before setting out for Havre, where the principal members of the French nobility had gone to await Madame's arrival from England. Malicorne pronounced the name of Manicamp, and was immediately admitted. He found the Comte de Guiche in the courtyard of the Hôtel Grammont, inspecting his horses, which his trainers and equerries were passing in review before him. The count, in the presence of his tradespeople and of his servants, was engaged in praising or blaming, as the case seemed to deserve, the appointments, horses, and harness which were being submitted to him : when, in the midst of this important occupation, the name of Manicamp was announced.

"Manicamp !" he exclaimed ; "let him enter by all means." And he advanced a few steps towards the door.

Malicorne slipped through the half-open door, and, looking at the Comte de Guiche, who was surprised to see a face which he did not recognise, instead of the one he expected, said, "Forgive me, monsieur le comte, but I believe a mistake has been made. M. Manicamp himself was announced to you, instead of which it is only an envoy from him."

"Ah !" exclaimed De Guiche, coldly ; "and what do you bring me?"

"A letter, monsieur le comte." Malicorne handed him the first document, and narrowly watched the comte's face, who, as he read it, began to laugh.

"What !" he exclaimed, "another maid of honour? Are all the maids of honour in France, then, under his protection?" Malicorne bowed.

"Why does he not come himself?" he inquired.

"He is confined to his bed."

"The deuce ! he has no money, then, I suppose," said De Guiche, shrugging his shoulders. "What does he do with his money?"

Malicorne made a movement, to indicate that upon this subject he was as ignorant as the comte himself. "Why does he not make use of his credit, then?" continued De Guiche.

"With regard to that, I think——"

"What?"

"That Manicamp has credit with no one but yourself, monsieur le comte."

"He will not be at Havre, then?" Whereupon Malicorne made another movement,

"But every one will be there."

"I trust, monsieur le comte, that he will not neglect so excellent an opportunity."

"He should be at Paris by this time."

"He will take the direct road there, to make up for lost time."

"Where is he now?"—"At Orleans."

"Monsieur," said De Guiche, "you seem to me a man of very good taste."

Malicorne wore Manicamp's clothes. He bowed in return, saying, "You do me a very great honour, monsieur le comte."

"Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"My name is Malicorne, monsieur."

"M. de Malicorne, what do you think of these pistol-holsters?"

Malicorne was a man of great readiness, and immediately understood the position of affairs. Besides the "de" which had been prefixed to his name, raised him to the rank of the person with whom he was conversing. He looked at the holsters with the air of a connoisseur, and said, without hesitation, "Somewhat heavy, monsieur."

"You see," said De Guiche to the saddler, "this gentleman, who understands these matters well, thinks the holsters heavy, a complaint I had already made." The saddler was full of excuses.

"What do you think," asked De Guiche, "of this horse, which I have just purchased?"

"To look at it, it seems perfect, monsieur le comte; but I must mount it before I give you my opinion."

"Do so, M. de Malicorne, and ride him round the court two or three times."

The courtyard of the hotel was so arranged, that whenever there was any occasion for it, it could be used as a riding-school. Malicorne, with perfect ease, arranged the bridle and snaffle-reins, placed his left hand on the horse's mane, and, with his foot in the stirrup, raised himself and seated himself in the saddle. At first he made the horse walk the whole circuit of the courtyard at a foot-pace; next at a trot; lastly at a gallop. He then drew up close to the count, dismounted, and threw the bridle to a groom standing by. "Well," said the comte, "what do you think of it, M. de Malicorne?"

"This horse, monsieur le comte, is of the Mecklenburg breed. In looking whether the bit suited his mouth, I saw that he was rising seven, the very age when the training of a horse intended for a charger should commence. The fore-hand is light. A horse which holds his head high, it is said, never tires his rider's hand. The withers are rather low. The drooping of the hind-quarters would almost make me doubt the purity of its German breed, and I think there is English blood in him. He stands well on his legs, but he trots high, and may cut himself, which requires attention to be paid to his shoeing. He is tractable; and as I made him turn round and change his feet, I found him quick and ready in doing so."

"Well said, M. de Malicorne," exclaimed the comte; "you are a judge of horses, I perceive;" then, turning towards him again, he continued: "You are most becomingly dressed, M. de Malicorne. That is not a provincial cut, I presume. Such a style of dress is not to be met with at Tours or Orleans."

"No, monsieur le comte; my clothes were made at Paris."

"There is no doubt of that. But let us resume our own affair. Manicamp wishes, for the appointment of a second maid of honour."

"You perceive what he has written, monsieur le comte."

"For whom was the first appointment?"

Malicorne felt the colour rise in his face, as he answered hurriedly, "A charming maid of honour, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Ah, ah! you are acquainted with her?"

"We are affianced, or nearly so."

"That is quite another thing, then—a thousand compliments," exclaimed De Guiche, upon whose lips a courtier's jest was already flitting, but to whom the word "affianced," addressed by Malicorne with respect to Mademoiselle de Montalais, recalled the respect due to women.

"And for whom is the second appointment destined?" asked De Guiche; "is it for any one to whom Manicamp may happen to be affianced? In that case, I pity her, poor girl! for she will have a sad fellow for a husband in him."

"No, monsieur le comte: the second appointment is for Mademoiselle la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière."

"Unknown," said De Guiche.

"Unknown? yes, monsieur," said Malicorne, smiling in his turn.

"Very good. I will speak to monsieur about it. By the bye, she is of gentle birth?"

"She belongs to a very good family, and is maid of honour to Madame."

"That's well. Will you accompany me to Monsieur?"

"Most certainly, if I may be permitted the honour."

"Have you your carriage?"

"No; I came here on horseback."

"Dressed as you are?"

"No, monsieur; I posted from Orleans, and I changed my travelling suit for the one I have on, in order to present myself to you."

"True, you already told me you had come from Orleans; saying which he crumpled Manicamp's letter in his hand, and thrust it in his pocket.

"I beg your pardon," said Malicorne timidly: "but I do not think you have read all."

"Not read all, do you say?"

"No; there were two letters in the same envelope."

"Oh, oh! are you sure?"—"Quite sure."

"Let us look then," said the comte, as he opened the letter again.

"Ah! you are right," he said, opening the paper which he had not yet read.

"I suspected it," he continued—"another application for an appointment under Monsieur. This Manicamp is a complete gulf—he is carrying on a trade in it."

"No, monsieur le comte; he wishes to make a present of it."

"To whom?"

"To myself, monsieur."

"Why did you not say so at once, my dear M. Mauvaisecorne?"

"Malicorne, monsieur le comte."

"Forgive me; it is the Latin which bothers me—that terrible habit of etymologies. Why the deuce are young men of family taught Latin? *Mala* and *mauvaise*—you understand it is the same thing. You will forgive me, I trust, M. de Malicorne."

"Your kindness affects me much, monsieur; but it is a reason why I should make you acquainted with one circumstance without any delay."

"What is it?"

"That I was not born a gentleman. I am not without courage, and not altogether deficient in ability; but my name is Malicorne simply."

"You appear to me, monsieur," exclaimed the comte, looking at the astute face of his companion, "to be a most agreeable man. Your face pleases me, M. Malicorne; and you must possess some indisputably excellent qualities to have pleased that egotistical Manicamp. Be candid, and tell me whether you are not some saint descended upon the earth."

"Why so?"

"For the simple reason that he makes you a present of anything. Did you not say that he intended to make you a present of some appointment in the king's household?"

"I beg your pardon, comte; but if I succeed in obtaining the appointment, you, and not he, will have bestowed it on me."

"Besides he will not have given it to you for nothing, I suppose. Stay, have it;—there is a Malicorne at Orleans, who lends money to the prince."

"I think that must be my father, monsieur."

"Ah! the prince has the father, and that terrible devourer of a Manicamp has the son. Take care, monsieur; I know him. He will fleece you completely."

"The only difference is, that I lend without interest," said Malicorne, smiling.

"I was correct in saying you were either a saint, or very much resembled one. M. Malicorne, you shall have the post you want, or I will forfeit my name."

"Ah! monsieur le comte, what a debt of gratitude shall I not owe you!" said Malicorne, transported.

"Let us go to the prince, my dear M. Malicorne." And De Guiche proceeded towards the door, desiring Malicorne to follow him. At the very moment they were about to cross the threshold, a young man appeared on the other side. He was from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, of pale complexion, bright eyes, and brown hair and eyebrows. "Good day," he said, suddenly, almost pushing De Guiche back into the courtyard again.

"Is that you De Wardes?—What! and booted, spurred, and whip in hand, too?"

"The most befitting costume for a man about to set off for Havre. There will be no one left in Paris to-morrow." And hereupon he saluted Malicorne with great ceremony, whose handsome dress gave him the appearance of a prince in rank.

"M. Malicorne," said De Guiche to his friend. De Wardes bowed.

"M. de Wardes," said De Guiche to Malicorne, who bowed in return. "By the bye, De Wardes," continued De Guiche, "you who are so well acquainted with these matters, can you tell us, probably, what appointments are still vacant at the court; or rather in the prince's household?"

"In the prince's household," said De Wardes, looking up with an air of consideration, "let me see—the appointment of the master of the horse is vacant, I believe."

"Oh," said Malicorne, "there is no question of such a post as that, monsieur; my ambition is not nearly so exalted."

De Wardes had a more penetrating observation than De Guiche, and

understood Malicorne immediately. "The fact is," he said, looking at him from head to foot, "a man must be either a duke or a peer to fill that post."

"All I solicit," said Malicorne, "is a very humble appointment; I am of little importance, and I do not rank myself above my position."

"M. Malicorne, whom you see here," said De Guiche to De Wardes, "is a very excellent fellow, whose only misfortune is that of not being of gentle birth. As far as I am concerned, you know, I attach little value to those who have gentle birth alone to boast of."

"Assuredly," said De Wardes; "but will you allow me to remark, my dear comte, that, without rank of some sort, one can hardly hope to belong to his royal highness's household."

"You are right," said the comte, "the etiquette is very strict with regard to such matters. The deuce! we never thought of that."

"Alas! a sad misfortune for me, monsieur le comte," said Malicorne, changing colour slightly.

"Yet not without remedy, I hope," returned De Guiche.

"The remedy is found easily enough," exclaimed De Wardes; "you can be created a gentleman. His eminence the Cardinal Mazarin did nothing else from morning till night."

"Hush, hush, De Wardes," said the comte; "no jests of that kind. It becomes us to turn such matters into ridicule. Letters of nobility, true, are purchasable; but that is a sufficient misfortune without the nobles themselves laughing at it."

"Upon my word, De Guiche, you're quite a puritan, as the English say."

At this moment, the Vicomte de Bragelonne was announced by one of the servants in the courtyard, in precisely the same manner as he would have done in a room.

"Come here, my dear Raoul. What, you too, booted and spurred? You are setting off then?"

Bragelonne approached the group of young men and saluted them with that quiet and serious manner which was peculiar to him. His salutation was principally addressed to De Wardes, with whom he was unacquainted, and whose features, on his perceiving Raoul, had assumed a strange sternness of expression. "I have come, De Guiche," he said, "to ask your companionship. We set off for Havre, I presume."

"This is admirable—this is delightful. We shall have a capital journey. M. Malicorne, M. Bragelonne—ah! M. de Wardes, let me present you." The young men saluted each other in a restrained manner. Their two natures seemed, from the very beginning, disposed to take exception to each other. De Wardes was pliant, subtle, and full of dissimulation; Raoul was calm, grave, and upright. "Decide between us—between De Wardes and myself, Raoul."

"Upon what subject?"

"Upon the subject of noble birth."

"Who can be better informed on that subject than a De Grammont?"

"No compliments; it is your opinion I ask."

"At least inform me of the subject under discussion."

"De Wardes asserts that the distribution of titles is abused; I, on the contrary, maintain that a title is useless as regards the man on whom it is bestowed."

"And you are correct," said Bragelonne, quietly.

"But, monsieur le vicomte," interrupted De Wardes, with a kind of obstinacy, "I affirm that it is I who am correct."

"What was your opinion, monsieur?"

"I was saying that everything is done in France at the present moment, to humiliate men of family."

"And by whom?"

"By the king himself. He surrounds himself with people who cannot show four quarterings."

"Nonsense," said De Guiche; "where could you possibly have seen that, De Wardes?"

"One example will suffice," he returned, directing his look fully upon Raoul.

"State it, then."

"Do you know who has just been nominated captain-general of the musketeers—an appointment more valuable than a peerage; for it gives precedence over all the *maréchals* of France."

Raoul's colour mounted in his face; for he saw the object De Wardes had in view. "No; who has been appointed? In any case it must have been very recently, for the appointment was vacant eight days ago; a proof of which is, that the king refused Monsieur, who solicited the post for one of his *protégés*."

"Well, the king refused it to Monsieur's *protégé*, in order to bestow it upon the Chevalier d'Artagnan, a younger brother of some Gascon family, who has been trailing his sword in the antechambers during the last thirty years."

"Forgive me if I interrupt you," said Raoul, darting a glance full of severity at De Wardes: "but you give me the impression of being unacquainted with the gentleman of whom you are speaking."

"I unacquainted with M. d'Artagnan? Can you tell me, monsieur, who does know him?"

"Those who do know him, monsieur," replied Raoul, with still greater calmness and sternness of manner, "are in the habit of saying, that if he is not as good a gentleman as the king—which is not his fault—he is the equal of all the kings of the earth in courage and loyalty. Such is my opinion, monsieur; and I thank heaven I have known M. d'Artagnan from my birth."

De Wardes was about to reply, when De Guiche interrupted him.

## CHAPTER LXXXII.

### THE PORTRAIT OF MADAME.

THE discussion was becoming full of bitterness. De Guiche perfectly understood the whole matter, for there was in Bragelonne's look something instinctively hostile, while in that of De Wardes, there was something like a determination to offend. Without inquiring into the different feelings which actuated his two friends, De Guiche resolved to ward off the blow which he felt was on the point of being dealt by one of them, and perhaps by both. "Gentlemen," he said, "we must take our leave of each other, I must pay a visit to Monsieur. You, De Wardes, will accompany me to the Louvre, and you, Raoul, will remain here master of the house; and as all that is done here is under your advice, you will bestow the last glance upon my preparations for departure."

Raoul, with the air of one who neither seeks nor fears a quarrel, bowed his head in token of assent, and seated himself upon a bench in the sun. "That is well," said De Guiche, "remain where you are, Raoul, and tell

them to show you the two horses I have just purchased : you will give me your opinion, for I only bought them on condition that you ratified the purchase. By the bye, I have to beg your pardon for having omitted to inquire after the Comte de la Fère." While pronouncing these latter words, he closely observed De Wardes, in order to perceive what effect the name of Raoul's father would produce upon him. "I thank you," answered the young man, "the count is very well." A gleam of deep hatred passed into De Wardes' eyes. De Guiche, who appeared not to notice the foreboding expression, went up to Raoul, and, grasping him by the hand, said, "It is agreed, then, Bragelonne, is it not, that you will rejoin us in the courtyard of the Palais Royal?" He then signed to De Wardes to follow him, who had been engaged in balancing himself, first on one foot, then on the other. "We are going," said he ; "come, M. Malicorne." This name made Raoul start ; for it seemed that he had already heard it pronounced before, but he could not remember on what occasion. While trying to do so, half-dreamingly, yet half irritated at his conversation with De Wardes, the three young men were on their way towards the Palais Royal, where Monsieur was residing. Malicorne learned two things : the first, that the young men had something to say to each other ; and the second, that he ought not to walk in the same line with them ; and therefore he walked behind. "Are you mad?" said De Guiche to his companion, as soon as they had left the Hôtel de Grammont ; "you attack M. d'Artagnan and that, too, before Raoul."

"Well," said De Wardes, "what then?"

"What do you mean by 'what then?'"

"Certainly, is there any prohibition against attacking M. d'Artagnan?"

"But you know very well that M. d'Artagnan was one of those celebrated and terrible four men who were called the musketeers."

"That may be ; but I do not perceive why, on that account, I should be forbidden to hate M. d'Artagnan."

"What cause has he given you?"

"Me ! personally, none."

"Why hate him, therefore?"

"Ask my dead father that question."

"Really, my dear De Wardes, you surprise me. M. d'Artagnan is not one to leave unsettled any *enmity* he may have to arrange, without completely clearing his account. Your father, I have heard, on his side, carried matters with a high hand. Moreover, there are no enmities so bitter which cannot be washed away by blood, by a good sword-thrust loyally given."

"Listen to me, my dear De Guiche : this inveterate dislike existed between my father and M. d'Artagnan, and when I was quite a child he acquainted me with the reason for it ; and, as forming part of my inheritance, I regard it as a particular legacy bestowed upon me."

"And does this hatred concern M. d'Artagnan alone?"

"As for that, M. d'Artagnan was too intimately associated with his three friends, that some portion of the full measure of my hatred for him should not fall to their lot ; and that hatred is of such a nature that, whenever the opportunity occurs, they shall have no occasion to complain of their portion."

De Guiche had kept his eyes fixed on De Wardes, and shuddered at the bitter manner in which the young man smiled. Something like a presentiment flashed across his mind. He knew that the time had passed away for *grands coups entre gentilshommes*, but that the feeling of hatred trea-

sured up in the mind, instead of being diffused abroad, was still hatred all the same ; that a smile was sometimes as full of meaning as a threat ; and, in a word, that, to the fathers who had hated with their hearts and fought with their arms, would now succeed the sons, who themselves, also, would indeed hate with their hearts, but would no longer encounter their enemies, save by the means of intrigue or treachery. As, therefore, it certainly was not Raoul whom he could suspect either of intrigue or treachery, it was on Raoul's account that De Guiche trembled. However, while these gloomy forebodings cast a shade of anxiety over De Guiche's countenance, De Wardes had resumed the entire mastery over himself.

"At all events," he observed, "I have no personal ill-will towards M. de Bragelonne ; I do not know him even."

"In any case," said De Guiche, with a certain amount of severity in his tone of voice, "do not forget one circumstance—that Raoul is my most intimate friend ;" a remark at which De Wardes bowed.

The conversation terminated there, although De Guiche tried his utmost to draw out his secret from him ; but doubtless De Wardes had determined to say nothing further, and he remained impenetrable. De Guiche therefore promised himself a more satisfactory result with Raoul. In the meantime they had reached the Palais Royal, which was surrounded by a crowd of lookers-on. The household belonging to Monsieur awaited his orders to mount their horses, in order to form part of the escort of the ambassadors, to whom had been intrusted the care of bringing the young princess to Paris. The brilliant display of horses, arms, and rich liveries, afforded some compensation in those times, thanks to the kindly feelings of the people, and to the traditions of deep devotion to their sovereigns, for the enormous expenses charged upon the taxes. Mazarin had said, "Let them sing, provided they pay ;" while Louis XIV.'s remark was, "Let them look." Sight had replaced the voice : the people could still look, but they could no longer sing. De Guiche left De Wardes and Malicorne at the bottom of the grand staircase, while he himself, who shared the favour and good graces of Monsieur with the Chevalier de Lorraine, who always smiled at him most affectionately, while he could not endure him, went straight to the prince's apartments, whom he found engaged in admiring himself in the glass, and in putting rouge on his face. In a corner of the cabinet the Chevalier de Lorraine was extended full length upon some cushions, having just had his long hair curled, with which he was playing in the same manner a woman would have done. The prince turned round as the count entered, and, perceiving who it was, said :

"Ah ! is that you, Guiche ? Come here and tell me the truth."

"You know, my lord, it is one of my defects to speak the truth."

"You will hardly believe, De Guiche, how that wicked chevalier has annoyed me."

The chevalier shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, he pretends," continued the prince, "that Mdle. Henrietta is better looking as a woman than I am as a man."

"Do not forget, my lord," said De Guiche, frowning slightly, "you require me to speak the truth."—"Certainly," said the prince, tremblingly.

"Well, and I shall tell it you."

"Do not be in a hurry, Guiche !" exclaimed the prince ; "you have plenty of time. Look at me attentively, and try and recollect Madame. Besides, her portrait is there ; look at it." And he held out to him a miniature of the finest possible execution. De Guiche took it, and looked at it for a long time attentively.

"Upon my honour, my lord, this is indeed a most lovely face."

"But look at me, count, look at me," said the prince, endeavouring to direct upon himself the attention of the count, who was completely absorbed in contemplation of the portrait.

"It is wonderful," murmured Guiche.

"Really, one would almost imagine you had never seen this girl before."

"It is true, my lord, I have seen her, but it is five years ago; there is a great difference between a child of twelve years old and a young girl of seventeen."

"Well, what is your opinion?"

"My opinion is that the portrait must be flattered, my lord."

"Of that," said the prince triumphantly, "there can be no doubt; but let us suppose that it is not flattered, what would your opinion be?"

"My lord, your highness is exceedingly happy to have so charming a bride."

"Very well, that is your opinion of her, but of me?"

"My opinion, my lord, is, that you are far too handsome for a man."

The Chevalier de Lorraine burst out laughing. The prince understood how severe towards himself this opinion of the Comte de Guiche was, and he looked somewhat displeased, saying, "My friends are not over indulgent." De Guiche looked at the portrait again, and, after lengthened contemplation, returned it with apparent unwillingness, saying, "Most decidedly, my lord, I should rather prefer to look ten times at your highness, than to look at Madame once again." It seemed as if the chevalier had detected some mystery in these words, which were incomprehensible to the prince, for he exclaimed: "Very well, get married yourself." Monsieur continued rousing himself, and when he had finished, looked at the portrait again, once more turned to admire himself in the glass, and smiled and no doubt was satisfied with the comparison. "You are very kind to have come," he said to Guiche, "I feared you would leave without bidding me adieu."

"Your highness knows me too well to believe me capable of so great a disrespect."

"Besides, I suppose you have something to ask from me before leaving Paris?"

"Your highness has indeed guessed correctly, for I have a request to make."—"Very good, what is it?"

The Chevalier de Lorraine immediately displayed the greatest attention for he regarded every favour conferred upon another as a robbery committed against himself. And, as Guiche hesitated, the prince said: "It be money, nothing could be more fortunate, for I am in funds; the surintendant of the finances has sent me 500,000 pistoles."

"I thank your highness; but it is not an affair of money."

"What is it then? Tell me."

"The appointment of a maid of honour."

"Oh! oh! Guiche, what a protector you have become of young ladies," said the prince, "you never speak of any one else now."

The Chevalier de Lorraine smiled, for he knew very well that nothing displeased the prince more than to show any interest in ladies. "My lord," said the comte, "it is not I who am directly interested in the lady of whom I have just spoken; I am acting on behalf of one of my friends."

"Ah! that is different; what is the name of the young lady in whom your friend is interested?"

"Mdlle. de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière ; she is already maid of honour to the dowager princess."

"Why, she is lame," said the Chevalier de Lorraine, stretching himself on his cushions.

"Lame," repeated the prince, "and Madame to have her constantly before her eyes? Most certainly not, it may be dangerous for her when in an interesting condition." The Chevalier de Lorraine burst out laughing.

"Chevalier," said Guiche, "your conduct is ungenerous ; while I am soliciting a favour, you do me all the mischief you can."

"Forgive me, comte," said the Chevalier de Lorraine, somewhat uneasy at the tone in which Guiche had made his remark, "but I had no intention of doing so, and I begin to believe that I have mistaken one young lady for another."

"There is no doubt of it, monsieur ; and I do not hesitate to declare that such is the case."

"Do you attach much importance to it, Guiche?" inquired the prince.

"I do, my lord."

"Well, you shall have it ; but ask me for no more appointments, for there are none to give away."

"Ah !" exclaimed the chevalier, "mid-day already, that is the hour fixed for the departure."

"You dismiss me, monsieur?" inquired Guiche.

"Really, comte, you treat me very ill to-day," replied the chevalier.

"For heaven's sake, comte, for heaven's sake, chevalier," said Monsieur, "do you not see how you are distressing me."

"My signature?" said Guiche.

"Take a blank appointment from that drawer, and give it to me." Guiche handed the prince the document indicated, and at the same time presented him with a pen already dipped in ink ; whereupon the prince signed. "Here," he said, returning him the appointment, "but I give it on one condition."

"Name it."

"That you will make friends with the chevalier."

"Willingly," said Guiche. And he held out his hand to the chevalier with an indifference amounting to contempt.

"Adieu, comte," said the chevalier, without seeming in any way to have noticed the comte's slight ; "adieu, and bring us back a princess who will not talk with her own portrait too much."

"Yes, set off and lose no time. By the bye, who accompany you?"

"Bragelonne and De Wardes."

"Both excellent and fearless companions."

"Too fearless," said the chevalier ; "endeavour to bring them both back, comte."

"Bad heart, bad heart," murmured De Guiche ; "he scents mischief everywhere, and sooner than anything else." And taking leave of the prince, he quitted the apartment. As soon as he reached the vestibule, he waved in the air the paper which the prince had signed. Malicorne hurried forward, and received it trembling with delight. When, however, he held it in his hand, Guiche observed that he still awaited something further.

"Patience, monsieur," he said ; "the Chevalier de Lorraine was there, and I feared an utter failure if I asked too much at once. Wait until I return. Adieu."

"Adieu, monsieur le comte ; a thousand thanks," said Malicorne.

"Send Manicamp to me. By the way, monsieur, is it true that Mlle. de la Vallière is lame?" As he said this, a horse drew up behind him, and, on turning round, he noticed that Bragelonne, who had just at that moment entered the court-yard, turned suddenly pale. The poor lover had heard the remark, which, however, was not the case with Malicorne, for he was already beyond the reach of the comte's voice.

"Why is Louise's name spoken of her?" said Raoul to himself ; "oh, let not De Wardes, who stands smiling ; wonder, even say a word about her in my presence."

"Now, gentlemen," exclaimed the Comte de Guiche, "prepare to start."

At this moment, the prince, who had completed his toilette, appeared at the window, and was immediately saluted by the acclamations of all who composed the escort, and ten minutes afterwards, banners, scarfs, and feathers were fluttering and waving in the air, as the cavalcade galloped away.

## CHAPTER LXXXIII.

### HAVRE.

THIS brilliant and animated company, the members of which were inspired by various feelings, arrived at Havre four days after their departure from Paris. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and no intelligence had yet been received of Madame. They were soon engaged in quest of apartments ; but the greatest confusion immediately ensued among the masters, and violent quarrels among their attendants. In the midst of this disorder, the Comte de Guiche fancied he recognised Manicamp. It was, indeed, Manicamp himself ; but as Malicorne had taken possession of his very best costume, he had not been able to get any other than a suit of violet velvet, trimmed with silver. Guiche recognised him as much by his dress as by his features, for he had very frequently seen Manicamp in this violet suit, which was his last resource. Manicamp presented himself to the comte under an arch of torches, which set fire to, rather than illuminated, the gate by which Havre is entered, and which is situated close to the tower of Francis I. The comte, remarking the woe-begone expression of Manicamp's face, could not resist laughing. "Well, my poor Manicamp," he exclaimed, "how violet you look ; are you in mourning?"

"Yes," replied Manicamp ; I am in mourning."

"For whom, or for what?"

"For my blue-and-gold suit, which has disappeared, and in the place of which I could find nothing but this ; and I was even obliged to economise from compulsion, in order to get possession of it."

"Indeed?"

"It is singular you should be astonished at that, since you leave me without any money."

"At all events, here you are, and that is the principal thing."

"By the most horrible roads."

"Where are you lodging?"

"Lodging?"

"Yes."

"I am not lodging anywhere."

De Guiche began to laugh. "Well," said he, "where do you intend to lodge?"

"In the same place you do."

"But I don't know."

"What do you mean, by saying you don't know?"

"Certainly, how is it likely I should know where I should stay?"

"Have you not retained an hotel?"—"I?"

"Yes, you or the prince."

"Neither of us has thought of it. Havre is of considerable size, I suppose, and provided I can get a stable for a dozen horses, and a suitable house in a good quarter——"

"Certainly, there are some very excellent houses."

"Well, then——"

"But not for us."

"What do you mean by saying not for us?—for whom, then?"

"For the English, of course."

"For the English?"

"Yes; the houses are all taken."

"By whom?"—"By the Duke of Buckingham."

"I beg your pardon!" said Guiche, whose attention this name had awakened.

"Yes, by the Duke of Buckingham. His grace has been preceded by a courier, who arrived here three days ago, and immediately retained all the houses fit for habitation which the town possesses."

"Come, come, Manicamp, let us understand each other."

"Well, what I have told you is clear enough, it seems to me."

"But surely Buckingham does not occupy the whole of Havre?"

"He certainly does not occupy it, since he has not yet arrived; but, when once disembarked, he will occupy it."

"Oh! oh!"

"It is quite clear you are not acquainted with the English; they have a perfect rage for monopolising everything."

"That may be; but a man who has the whole of one house is satisfied with it, and does not require two."

"Yes, but two men?"

"Be it so; for two men, two houses, or four, or six, or ten, if you like; but there are a hundred houses at Havre."

"Yes, and all the hundred are let."

"Impossible!"

"What an obstinate fellow you are. I tell you Buckingham has hired all the houses surrounding the one which the queen-dowager of England and the princess her daughter will inhabit."

"He is singular enough, indeed," said De Wardes, caressing his horse's neck.

"Such is the case, however, monsieur."

"You are quite sure of it, Monsieur de Manicamp?" and as he put this question he looked slyly at De Guiche, as though to interrogate him upon the degree of confidence to be placed in his friend's state of mind. During this discussion the night had closed in, and the torches, pages, attendants, squires, horses, and carriages, blocked up the gate and the open place; the torches were reflected in the channel, which the rising tide was gradually filling, while on the other side of the jetty might be noticed groups of curious lookers-on, consisting of sailors and townspeople, who seemed anxious to miss nothing of the spectacle. Amidst all this hesitation of purpose, Bragelonne, as though a perfect stranger to the scene, remained in his horse somewhat in the rear of Guiche, and watched the rays of

light reflected in the water, inhaling with rapture the sea-breezes, and listening to the waves which noisily broke upon the shore and on the beach, dashing the spray into the air with a noise which echoed in the distance. "But," exclaimed De Guiche, "what is Buckingham's motive for providing such a supply of lodgings?"

"Yes, yes," said De Wardes, "what reason has he?"

"A very excellent one" replied Manicamp.

"You know what it is, then?"—"I fancy I do."

"Tell us, then."—"Bend your head down towards me."

"What! can it not be said except in secrecy?"

"You shall judge of that yourself."

"Very well." De Guiche bent down.

"Love," said Manicamp.

"I do not understand you at all."

"Say, rather, you cannot understand me *yet*."

"Explain yourself."

"Very well! it is quite certain, count, that his royal highness will be the most unfortunate of husbands."

"What do you mean?"—"The Duke of Buckingham——"

"It is a name of ill-omen to princes of the house of France."

"And so the duke is madly in love with Madame, so the rumour runs and will have no one approach near her but himself."

De Guiche coloured. "Thank you, thank you," said he to Manicamp, grasping his hand. Then, recovering himself, added, "Whatever you do, Manicamp, be careful that this project of Buckingham's is not made known to any Frenchman here; for, if so, swords will be unsheathed in this country which do not fear the English steel."

"But after all," said Manicamp, "I have had no satisfactory proof given me of the love in question, and it may be no more than a mere idle tale."

"No, no," said De Guiche, "it must be the truth;" and, despite his command over himself, he clenched his teeth.

"Well," said Manicamp, "after all, what does it matter to you? What does it matter to me whether the prince is to be what the late king was Buckingham the father for the queen, Buckingham the son for the young princess."

"Manicamp! Manicamp!"

"It is a fact, or, at least, everybody says so."

"Silence!" said the count.

"But why silence?" said De Wardes; "it is a highly creditable circumstance for the French nation. Are not you of my opinion, Monsieur de Bragelonne?"

"To what circumstance do you allude?" inquired De Bragelonne, with an abstracted air.

"That the English should render homage to the beauty of our queen and our princesses."

"Forgive me, but I have not been paying attention to what has passed; will you oblige me by explaining?"

"There is no doubt it was necessary that Buckingham the father should come to Paris in order that his majesty King Louis XIII., should perceive that his wife was one of the most beautiful women of the French court and it seems necessary, at the present time, that Buckingham the son should consecrate, by the devotion of his worship, the beauty of a princess who has French blood in her veins. The fact of having inspired

passion on the other side of the Channel will henceforth confer a title to beauty on its object."

"Sir," replied De Bragelonne, "I do not like to hear such matters treated so lightly. Gentlemen as we are should be careful guardians of the honour of our queens and our princesses. If we jest at them, what will our servants do?"

"How am I to understand that," said De Wardes, whose ears tingled at the remark.

"In any way you choose, monsieur," replied De Bragelonne coldly.

"Bragelonne, Bragelonne!" murmured Guiche.

"M. de Wardes," exclaimed Manicamp, noticing that the young man had spurred his horse close to the side of Raoul.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said De Guiche, "do not set such an example in public, in the street too. De Wardes, you are wrong."

"Wrong; in what way, may I ask you?"

"You are wrong, monsieur, because you are always speaking ill of some one or something," replied Raoul, with undisturbed composure.

"Be indulgent, Raoul," said De Guiche, in an undertone.

"Pray do not think of fighting, gentlemen," said Manicamp, "before you have rested yourselves; for in that case you will not be able to do much."

"Come," said De Guiche, "forward, gentlemen!" and, breaking through the horses and attendants, he cleared the way for himself towards the centre of the square, through the crowd, followed by the whole cavalcade. A large gateway looking out upon a courtyard was open; Guiche entered the courtyard; and Bragelonne, De Wardes, Manicamp, and three or four other gentlemen followed him. A sort of council of war was held, and the means to be employed for saving the dignity of the embassy were deliberated upon. Bragelonne was of opinion that the right of priority should be respected, while De Wardes suggested that the town should be sacked. This latter proposition appeared to Manicamp rather rash, he proposing instead that they should first rest themselves. This was the wisest thing to do, but, unhappily, to follow his advice, two things only were wanting; namely, a house and beds. De Guiche reflected for awhile, and then said aloud, "Let him who loves me, follow me!"

"The attendants also?" inquired a page, who had approached the group.

"Every one," exclaimed the impetuous young man. "Manicamp, show us the way to the house destined for her royal highness's residence."

Without in any way divining the count's project, his friends followed him, accompanied by a crowd of people, whose acclamations and delight seemed a happy omen for the success of the project with which they were yet unacquainted. The wind was blowing loudly from the harbour, and moaning in fitful gusts.

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## CHAPTER LXXXIV.

### AT SEA.

THE following day was somewhat calmer, although the wind still continued to blow. The sun had, however risen through a bank of reddened clouds, tinging with its crimson rays the crests of the black waves. Watch as impatiently kept from the different look-outs. Towards eleven o'clock in the morning a ship, with sails full set, was signalled as in view;

two others followed at the distance of about half a knot. They approached like arrows shot from the bow of a skilful archer; and yet the sea ran so high that their speed was as nothing compared to the rolling of the billows in which the vessels were plunging first in one direction and then in another. The English fleet was soon recognised by the lines of the ships, and by the colour of their pennants; the one which had the princess on board and carried the admiral's flag preceded the others.

The rumour now spread that the princess was arriving. The whole French court ran to the harbour, while the quays and jetties were soon covered by crowds of people. Two hours afterwards, the other vessels had overtaken the flag-ship, and the three, not venturing perhaps to enter the narrow entrance of the harbour, cast anchor between Havre and La Hève. When the manœuvre had been completed, the vessel which bore the admiral saluted France by twelve discharges of cannon, which were returned, discharge for discharge, from Fort Francis the First. Immediately afterwards a hundred boats were launched,—they were covered with the richest stuffs, and destined for the conveyance of the different members of the French nobility towards the vessels at anchor. But when it was observed that even inside the harbour the boats were tossed to and fro and that beyond the jetty the waves rose mountains high, dashing upon the shore with a terrible uproar, it will readily be believed that not one of those frail boats would be able with safety to reach a fourth part of the distance between the shore and the vessels at anchor. A pilot-boat, however, notwithstanding the wind and the sea, was getting ready to leave the harbour for the purpose of placing itself at the admiral's orders.

De Guiche, who had been looking among the different boats for one stronger than the others, which might offer a chance of reaching the English vessels, perceiving the pilot-boat getting ready to start, said to Raoul: "Do you not think, Raoul, that intelligent and vigorous men, as we are, ought to be ashamed to retreat before the brute strength of wind and waves?"

"That is precisely the very reflection I was silently making to myself," replied Bragelonne.

"Shall we get into that boat, then, and push off? Will you come, De Wardes?"

"Take care, or you will get drowned," said Manicamp.

"And for no purpose," said De Wardes, "for, with the wind dead against you, as it will be, you will never reach the vessels."

"You refuse, then?"

"Assuredly I do; I would willingly risk and lose my life in an encounter against men," he said, glancing at Bragelonne, "but as to fighting with oars against waves, I have no taste for that."

"And for myself," said Manicamp, "even were I to succeed in reaching the ships, I should not be indifferent to the loss of the only good dress which I have left,—salt water would splash and spoil it."

"You, then, refuse also?" exclaimed De Guiche.

"Decidedly I do; I beg you to understand that most distinctly."

"But," exclaimed De Guiche, "look, De Wardes—look, Manicamp—look yonder, the princesses are looking at us from the poop of the admiral's vessel."

"An additional reason, my dear fellow, why we should not make ourselves ridiculous by taking a bath while they are looking on."

"Is that your last word, Manicamp?"—"Yes."

"And yours, De Wardes?"—"Yes."

"Then I go alone."

"Not so," said Raoul, "for I shall accompany you ; I thought it was understood we should do so."

The fact is, that Raoul, uninfluenced by any devotion, measuring the risk they would run, saw how imminent the danger was, but he willingly allowed himself to accept a peril which De Wardes had declined.

The boat was about to set off when De Guiche called to the pilot. "Stay," said he ; "we want two places in your boat ;" and wrapping five or six pistoles in paper, he threw them from the quay into the boat.

"It seems you are not afraid of salt water, young gentlemen."

"We are afraid of nothing," replied De Guiche.

"Come along, then."

The pilot approached the side of the boat, and the two young men, one after the other, with equal vivacity, jumped into the boat. "Courage, my men," said De Guiche ; "I have twenty pistoles left in this purse, and as soon as we reach the admiral's vessel they shall be yours." The sailors bent themselves to their oars, and the boat bounded over the crest of the waves. The interest taken in this hazardous expedition was universal ; the whole population of Havre hurried towards the jetties, and every look was directed towards the little barque ; at one moment it remained suspended upon the crest of the foaming waves, then suddenly glided downwards towards the bottom of a roaring abyss, where it seemed utterly lost within it. At the expiration of an hour's struggling with the waves, it reached the spot where the admiral's vessel was anchored, and from the side of which two boats had already been despatched towards their aid. Upon the quarter-deck of the flag-ship, sheltered by a canopy of velvet and ermine, which was suspended by stout supports, Madame Henrietta, the queen-dowager, and the young princess—with the admiral, the Duke of Norfolk, standing beside them,—watched with alarm this slender barque, at one moment carried to the heavens, and the next buried beneath the waves, and against whose dark sail the noble figures of the two French noblemen stood forth in relief like two luminous apparitions. The crew, leaning against the bulwarks and clinging to the shrouds, cheered the courage of the two daring young men, the skill of the pilot, and the strength of the sailors. They were received at the side of the vessel by a shout of triumph. The Duke of Norfolk, a handsome young man, from twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age, advanced to meet them. De Guiche and Bragelonne lightly mounted the ladder on the starboard side, and, conducted by the Duke of Norfolk, who resumed his place near them, they approached to offer their homage to the princesses. Respect, and yet more, a certain apprehension, for which he could not account, had hitherto restrained the Comte de Guiche from looking at Madame attentively, who, however, had observed him immediately, and had asked her mother, "Is not that Monsieur in the boat yonder ?" Madame Henrietta, who knew Monsieur better than her daughter did, smiled at the mistake her vanity had led her into, and had answered, "No ; it is only M. de Guiche, his favourite." The princess, at this reply, had been obliged to check an instinctive tenderness of feeling which the courage displayed by the count had awakened. At the very moment the princess had put this question to her mother, De Guiche had, at last, summoned courage to raise his eyes towards her, and could compare the original with the portrait he had so lately seen. No sooner had he remarked her pale face, her eyes so full of animation, her beautiful nut-brown hair, her expressive lips, and her every gesture, which, while betokening her royal descent, seemed to thank and

to encourage him at one and the same time, than he was, for a moment, so overcome, that, had it not been for Raoul, on whose arm he leant, he would have fallen. His friend's amazed look, and the encouraging gesture of the queen, restored Guiche to his self-possession. In a few words he explained his mission, explained in what way he had become the envoy of his royal highness ; and saluted, according to their rank and the reception they gave him, the admiral and several of the English noblemen who were grouped around the princesses.

Raoul was then presented, and was most graciously received ; the share that the Comte de la Fère had had in the restoration of Charles II. was known to all ; and, more than that, it was the comte who had been charged with the negotiation of the marriage, by means of which the granddaughter of Henry IV. was now returning to France. Raoul spoke English perfectly, and constituted himself his friend's interpreter with the young English noblemen, who were indifferently acquainted with the French language. At this moment a young man came forward of extremely handsome features, and whose dress and arms were remarkable for their extravagance of material. He approached the princesses, who were engaged in conversation with the Duke of Norfolk, and, in a voice which ill concealed his impatience, said, "It is time now to disembark, your royal highness." The younger of the princesses rose from her seat at this remark, and was about to take the hand which the young nobleman had extended to her, with an eagerness which arose from a variety of motives, when the admiral advanced between them, observing : "A moment, if you please, my lord ; it is not possible for ladies to disembark just now, the sea is too rough ; it is probable the wind may abate towards four o'clock, and the landing will not be effected, therefore, until this evening."

"Allow me to observe, my lord," said Buckingham, with an irritation of manner which he did not seek to disguise, "you detain these ladies, and you have no right to do so. One of them, unhappily, now belongs to France, and you perceive that France claims them by the voice of her ambassadors ;" and at the same moment he indicated Raoul and Guiche, whom he saluted.

"I cannot suppose that these gentlemen intend to expose the lives of their royal highnesses," replied the admiral.

"These gentlemen," retorted Buckingham, "arrived here safely, notwithstanding the wind ; allow me to believe that the danger will not be greater for their royal highnesses when the wind will be in their favour."

"These gentlemen have shown how great their courage is," said the admiral. "You may have observed that there was a great number of persons on shore who did not venture to accompany them. Moreover, the desire which they had to show their respect with the least possible delay to Madame and her illustrious mother, induced them to confront the sea, which is very tempestuous to-day, even for sailors. These gentlemen, however, whom I recommend as an example for my officers to follow, can hardly be so for these ladies."

Madame glanced at the Comte de Guiche, and perceived that his face was burning with confusion. This look had escaped Buckingham, who had eyes for nothing but watching Norfolk, of whom he was evidently very jealous, and seemed anxious to remove the princesses from the deck of a vessel where the admiral reigned supreme. "In that case," returned Buckingham, "I appeal to Madame herself."

"And I, my lord," retorted the admiral, "I appeal to my own conscience, and to my own sense of responsibility. I have undertaken to convey Madame safely and soundly to France, and I shall keep my promise."

"Yet, sir——" continued Buckingham.

"My lord, permit me to remind you that I command here."

"Are you aware what you are saying, my lord?" replied Buckingham, haughtily.

"Perfectly so ; I therefore repeat it : I alone command here, all yield obedience to me ; the sea and the winds, the ships and men too." This remark was made in a dignified, and authoritative manner. Raoul observed its effect upon Buckingham, who trembled from head to foot, and leaned against one of the poles of the tent to prevent himself falling ; his eyes became suffused with blood, and the hand which he did not need for his support wandered towards the hilt of his sword.

"My lord," said the queen, "permit me to observe that I agree in every particular with the Duke of Norfolk ; if the heavens, instead of being clouded as they are at the present moment, were perfectly serene and propitious, we can afford to bestow a few hours upon the officer who has conducted us so successfully, and with such extreme attention, to the French coast, where he is to take leave of us."

Buckingham, instead of replying, seemed to seek counsel from the expression of Madame's face. She, however, half concealed beneath the thick curtains of velvet and gold which sheltered her, had not listened to the discussion, having been occupied in watching the Comte de Guiche, who was conversing with Raoul. This was a fresh misfortune for Buckingham, who fancied he perceived in Madame Henrietta's look a deeper feeling than that of curiosity. He withdrew, almost tottering in his gait, and nearly stumbled against the mainmast of the ship.

"The duke has not acquired a steady footing yet," said the queen-mother, in French, "and that may possibly be his reason for wishing to find himself on firm land again."

The young man overheard this remark, turned suddenly pale, and letting his hands fall in great discouragement by his side, drew aside, mingling in one sigh his old affection and his new hatreds. The admiral, however, without taking any further notice of the duke's ill-humour, led the princesses into the quarter-deck cabin, where dinner had been served with a magnificence worthy in every respect of his guests. The admiral seated himself at the right hand of the princess, and placed the Comte de Guiche on her left. This was the place Buckingham usually occupied ; and when he entered the cabin, how profound was his unhappiness to see himself banished by etiquette from the presence of the sovereign to whom he owed respect, to a position inferior to that which, by his rank, he was entitled to occupy. De Guiche, on the other hand, paler still perhaps from happiness, than his rival was from anger, seated himself tremblingly next the princess, whose silken robe, as it lightly touched him, caused a tremor of mingled regret and happiness to pass through his whole frame. The feast finished, Buckingham darted forward to hand Madame Henrietta from the table ; but this time it was De Guiche's turn to give the duke a lesson.

"Have the goodness, my lord, from this moment," said he, "not to interpose between her royal highness and myself. From this moment, indeed, her royal highness belongs to France, and when her royal highness honours me by touching my hand, it is the hand of his royal highness Monsieur, the brother of the king of France, that she touches."

And saying this, he presented his hand to Madame Henrietta with so

marked a timidity, and, at the same time, with a nobleness of mien so intrepid, that a murmur of admiration rose from the English, whilst a groan of despair escaped from Buckingham's lips. Raoul, who loved, comprehended it all. He fixed upon his friend one of those profound looks which a friend or a mother can alone extend, either as a protector or guardian, over the child or the friend about to stray from the right path. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon the sun shone forth, the wind subsided, the sea became smooth as a crystal mirror, and the fog which had shrouded the coast disappeared like a veil withdrawn from before it. The smiling hills of France then appeared to the view, with their numerous white houses rendered more conspicuous by the bright green of the trees or the clear blue sky.

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## CHAPTER LXXXV.

### THE TENTS.

THE admiral, as has been seen, had determined to pay no further attention to Buckingham's threatening glances and fits of passion. In fact, from the moment they had left England he had gradually and quietly accustomed himself to it. De Guiche had not yet in any way remarked the animosity which appeared to influence that young nobleman against him, but he felt instinctively that there could be no sympathy between himself and the favourite of Charles II. The queen-mother, with greater experience and calmer judgment, perceived the exact position of affairs, and, as she discerned its danger, was prepared to meet it whenever the proper moment should arrive. Quiet had been everywhere restored, except in Buckingham's heart; he, in his impatience, addressed himself to the princess in a low tone of voice: "For Heaven's sake, madame, I implore you to hasten your disembarkation. Do you not perceive how that insolent Duke of Norfolk is killing me with his attentions and devotions to you?"

Henrietta heard this remark; she smiled, and, without turning her head towards him, but giving only to the tone of her voice that inflection of gentle reproach and languid impertinence which coquetry so well knows how to assume, she murmured, "I have already told you, my lord, that you must have taken leave of your senses."

Not a single detail escaped Raoul's attention: he had heard both Buckingham's entreaty and the princess's reply; he had remarked Buckingham retire, had heard his deep sigh, and saw him pass his hand across his face. He understood everything, and trembled as he reflected on the position of affairs, and the state of the minds of those about him. At last the admiral, with studied delay, gave the last directions for the departure of the boats. Buckingham heard the directions given with such an exhibition of delight that a stranger would almost have imagined the young man's reason was affected. As the Duke of Norfolk gave his orders, a large boat or barge, decked with flags, and capable of holding about twenty rowers and fifteen passengers, was slowly lowered from the side of the admiral's vessel. The barge was carpeted with velvet, and decorated with coverings embroidered with the arms of England, and with garlands of flowers; for at that time signs and parables were cultivated freely enough. No sooner was the boat afloat, and the rowers, with oars uplifted, awaiting, like soldiers presenting arms, the embarkation of the princess, than Buckingham ran forward to the ladder in order to take his place in the boat. His progress

as, however, arrested by the queen. "My lord," she said, "it is hardly coming that you should allow my daughter and myself to land, without having previously ascertained that our apartments are properly prepared. beg your lordship to be good enough to precede us ashore, and to give directions that everything be in proper order on our arrival."

This was a fresh disappointment for the duke, and still more so, since it was so unexpected. He hesitated, coloured violently, but could not reply. He had thought he might be able to keep near Madame during the passage to the shore, and, by this means, to enjoy to the very last moment the brief period which fortune still reserved for him. The order, however, was explicit, and the admiral, who heard it given, immediately called out, "Launch the ship's gig." His directions were executed with that celerity which distinguishes every manœuvre on board a man-of-war.

Buckingham, in utter hopelessness, cast a look of despair at the princess, supplication towards the queen, and directed a glance full of anger towards the admiral. The princess pretended not to notice him, while the queen turned aside her head, and the admiral laughed outright, at the sound of which Buckingham seemed ready to spring upon him. The queen-mother rose, and, with a tone of authority, said, "Pray set off, sir."

The young duke hesitated, looked around him, and with a last effort, half-choked by contending emotions, said, "And you, gentlemen, M. de Guiche and M. de Bragelonne, do not you accompany me?"

De Guiche bowed and said, "Both M. de Bragelonne and myself await your majesty's orders; whatever may be the commands she imposes on us, we shall obey them." Saying this, he looked towards the princess, who cast down her eyes.

"Your grace will remember," said the queen, "that M. de Guiche is here to represent Monsieur; it is he who will do the honours of France, as you have done those of England. His presence cannot be dispensed with; besides, we owe him this slight favour for the courage he displayed in venturing to seek us in such terrible weather."

Buckingham opened his lips as if he were about to speak, but, whether thoughts or expressions failed him, not a syllable escaped them; and turning away, as though he were out of his mind, he leapt from the vessel into the boat. The sailors were just in time to catch hold of him to steady themselves, for his weight and the rebound had almost upset the boat.

"His grace cannot be in his senses," said the admiral aloud to Raoul.

"I am uneasy on his grace's account," replied Bragelonne.

While the boat was advancing towards the shore, the duke kept his eyes immovably fixed upon the admiral's ship, like a miser torn away from his coffers, or like a mother separated from her child, about to be led away to death. No one, however, acknowledged his signals, his gesticulations, or his pitiful gestures. In very anguish of mind he sank down in the boat, burying his hands in his hair, whilst the boat, impelled by the exertions of the thoughtless sailors, flew over the waves. On his arrival, he was in such a state of apathy that, had he not been received at the harbour by the messenger whom he had directed to precede him, he would hardly have been able to ask his way. Having once, however, reached the house which had been set apart for him, he shut himself up, like Achilles in his tent. The barge bearing the princesses quitted the admiral's vessel at the very moment Buckingham had landed. It was followed by another boat, led with officers, courtiers, and zealous friends. Great numbers of the habitants of Havre, having embarked in fishing-boats, and boats of every description, set off to meet the royal barge. The cannon from the

forts fired salutes, which were returned by the flag-ship and the two other vessels, and the flashes from the open mouths of the cannon floated in white vapours over the waves, and then disappeared in the clear blue sky.

The princess landed at the steps of the quay. Bands of gay music greeted her arrival, and accompanied her every step she took. During the time she was passing through the centre of the town, and treading beneath her delicate feet the richest carpets and the gayest flowers which had been strewn upon the ground, De Guiche and Raoul, escaping from their English friends, hurried through the town and hastened rapidly towards the place intended for the residence of Madame.

"Let us hurry forward," said Raoul to De Guiche, "for, if I read Buckingham's character aright, he will create some disturbance, when he learns the result of our deliberations of yesterday."

"Never fear," said De Guiche, "De Wardes is there, who is determination itself, while Manicamp is the very personification of gentleness."

De Guiche was not, however, the less diligent on that account, and five minutes afterwards they were in sight of the Hôtel de Ville. The first thing which struck them was the number of people assembled in front of the square. "Excellent," said De Guiche, "our apartments, I see, are prepared."

In fact, in front of the Hôtel de Ville, upon the wide open space before it, eight tents had been raised, surmounted by the flags of France and England united. The hotel was surrounded by tents, as by a girdle of variegated colours; ten pages and a dozen mounted troopers, who had been given to the ambassadors for an escort, mounted guard before the tents. It had a singularly curious effect, almost fairy-like in its appearance. These tents had been constructed during the night-time. Fitted up, within and without, with the richest materials that De Guiche had been able to procure in Havre, they completely encircled the Hôtel de Ville. The only passage which led to the steps of the hotel, and which was not inclosed by the silken barricade, was guarded by two tents, resembling two pavilions, the doorways of both of which opened towards the entrance. These two tents were destined for De Guiche and Raoul; in whose absence, they were intended to be occupied, that of De Guiche by De Wardes, and that of Raoul by Manicamp. Surrounding these two tents, and the six others, a hundred officers, gentlemen, and pages, dazzling in their display of silk and gold, thronged like bees around a hive. Every one of them, their swords by their sides, was ready to obey the slightest sign either of De Guiche or Bragelonne, the two leaders of the embassy.

At the very moment the two young men appeared at the end of one of the streets leading to the square, they perceived crossing the square, at full gallop, a young man on horseback, and whose costume was of surprising richness. He pushed hastily through the crowd of curious lookers-on, and, at the sight of these unexpected erections, uttered a cry of anger and dismay. It was Buckingham, who had awakened from his stupor, in order to adorn himself with a costume perfectly dazzling from its beauty, and to await the arrival of the princess and the queen-mother at the Hôtel de Ville. At the entrance to the tents, the soldier barred his passage, and his further progress was arrested. Buckingham, completely infuriated, raised his whip; but his arm was seized by a couple of the officers. Of the two guardians of the tent, only one was there. De Wardes was in the interior of the Hôtel de Ville, engaged in attending to the execution of some orders given by De Guiche. At the noise made by Buckingham, Manicamp, who was indolently reclining upon the cushions at the doorway

one of the two tents, rose, with his usual indifference, and, perceiving that the disturbance continued, made his appearance from underneath the curtains. "What is the matter?" he said, in a gentle tone of voice, and who is it making this disturbance?" It so happened, that, at the moment he began to speak, silence had just been restored, and, although his voice was very soft and gentle in its tone, every one heard his question. Buckingham turned round, and looked at the tall, thin figure, and the listless expression of countenance of his questioner. Probably the personal appearance of Manicamp, who was dressed very plainly, did not inspire him with much respect, for he replied disdainfully, "Who may you be, monsieur?"

Manicamp, leaning on the arm of a gigantic trooper, as firm as the pillar of a cathedral, replied in his usual tranquil tone of voice—"And you, monsieur?"

"I, monsieur, am his grace the Duke of Buckingham; I have hired all the houses which surround the Hôtel de Ville, where I have business to transact; and, as these houses are let, they belong to me, and, as I reserved them in order to preserve the right of free access to the Hôtel de Ville, you are not justified in preventing me passing to it."

"But who prevents you passing, monsieur?" inquired Manicamp.

"Your sentinels."

"Because you wish to pass on horseback, and orders have been given to let only persons on foot pass."

"No one has any right to give orders here, except myself," said Buckingham.

"On what grounds?" inquired Manicamp, with his soft tone, "will you do me the favour to explain this enigma to me?"

"Because, as I have already told you, I have hired all the houses looking on the square."

"We are very well aware of that, since nothing but the square itself has been left for us."

"You are mistaken, monsieur; the square belongs to me, as well as the houses in it."

"Forgive me, monsieur, but you are mistaken there. In our country, we say, the highway belongs to the king, therefore this square is his majesty's; and, consequently, as we are the king's ambassadors, the square belongs to us."

"I have already asked you who you are, monsieur?" exclaimed Buckingham, exasperated at the coolness of his interlocutor.

"My name is Manicamp," replied the young man, in a voice, whose tones were as harmonious and sweet as the notes of an *Æolian harp*.

Buckingham shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, and said, "When I hired these houses which surround the Hôtel de Ville, the square was occupied; these barracks obstruct my sight, let them be removed."

A hoarse and angry murmur rang through the crowd of listeners at these words. De Guiche arrived at this moment; he pushed through the crowd which separated him from Buckingham, and, followed by Raoul, arrived on the scene of action, from one side, just as De Wardes arrived from the other. "Pardon me, my lord; but if you have any complaint to make, have the goodness to address it to me, inasmuch as it was I who supplied the plans for the construction of these tents."

"Moreover, I would beg you to observe, monsieur, that the term 'barrack' is objected to," added Manicamp graciously.

"You were saying, monsieur——" continued De Guiche.

"I was saying, monsieur le comte," resumed Buckingham in a tone of anger more marked than ever, although in some measure moderated by the presence of an equal, "I was saying that it is impossible these tents can remain where they are."

"Impossible!" exclaimed De Guiche, "and for what reason?"

"Because I object to them."

A movement of impatience escaped De Guiche, but a warning glance from Raoul restrained him.

"You should the less object to them, monsieur, on account of the abuse of priority you have permitted yourself to exercise."

"Abuse!"

"Most assuredly. You commission a messenger, who hires in your name the whole of the town of Havre, without considering the members of the French court, who would be sure to arrive here to meet Madame. Your grace will admit that this is hardly friendly conduct in the representative of a friendly nation."

"The right of possession belongs to him who is first on the spot."

"Not in France, monsieur."

"Why not in France?"

"Because France is a country where politeness is observed."

"Which means!" exclaimed Buckingham, in so violent a manner, that those who were present drew back, expecting an immediate collision.

"Which means, monsieur," replied De Guiche, turning pale, "that I have caused these tents to be raised as habitations for myself and my friends, as a shelter for the ambassadors of France, as the only place of refuge which your exactions have left us in the town; and that I and those who are with me shall remain in them, at least, until an authority more powerful, and particularly more supreme, than your own shall dismiss me from them."

"In other words, until we are ejected, as the lawyers say," observed Manicamp, blandly.

"I know an authority, monsieur, which I trust will be such as you wish for," said Buckingham, placing his hand on his sword.

At this moment, and as the goddess of Discord, inflaming all minds, was about to direct their swords against each other, Raoul gently placed his hand on Buckingham's shoulder. "One word, my lord," he said.

"My right, my right, first of all!" exclaimed the fiery young man.

"It is precisely upon that point I wish to have the honour of addressing a word to you."

"Very well, monsieur, but let your remarks be brief."

"One question is all I ask; you can hardly expect me to be briefer."

"Speak, monsieur, I am listening."

"Are you, or is the Duke of Orleans, going to marry the granddaughter of Henry IV.?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Buckingham, retreating a few steps, quite bewildered.

"Have the goodness to answer me," persisted Raoul tranquilly.

"Do you mean to ridicule me, monsieur?" inquired Buckingham.

"Your question is a sufficient answer for me. You admit, then, that it is not you who are going to marry the princess."

"You know it perfectly well, monsieur, I should imagine."

"I beg your pardon, but your conduct has been such as to leave it not altogether certain."

"Proceed, monsieur ; what do you mean to convey?"

Raoul approached the duke. "Are you aware, my lord," he said lowering his voice, "that your extravagancies very much resemble the excesses of jealousy. These jealous fits, with respect to any woman, are not becoming in one who is neither her lover nor her husband ; and I am sure I will admit that my remark applies with still greater force, when the subject in question is a princess of royal blood."

"Monsieur," exclaimed Buckingham, "do you mean to insult Madame Henrietta?"

"Be careful, my lord," replied Bragelonne coldly, "for it is you who insult her. A little while since, when on board the admiral's ship, you offended the queen, and exhausted the admiral's patience. I was observing you, my lord ; and, at first, I concluded you were not in possession of your senses, but I have since surmised the real character of your madness."

"Monsieur !" exclaimed Buckingham.

"One moment more, for I have yet another word to add. I trust I am the only one of my companions who have guessed it."

"Are you aware, monsieur," said Buckingham, trembling with mingled feelings of anger and uneasiness, "are you aware that you are holding a language towards me, which requires to be checked."

"Weigh your words well, my lord," said Raoul, haughtily ; "my nature is not such that its vivacities need checking ; whilst you, on the contrary, are descended from a race whose passions are suspected by all true gentlemen ; I repeat, therefore, for the second time, be careful !"

"Careful of what, may I ask ? Do you presume to threaten me?"

"I am the son of the Comte de la Fère, my lord, and I never threaten, because I strike first. Therefore, understand me well, the threat that I hold out to you is this——"

Buckingham clenched his hands, but Raoul continued, as though he had not observed the movement. "At the very first word, beyond the respect and deference due to her royal highness, which you permit yourself to use towards her.——Be patient, my lord, for I am perfectly so."

"You?"

"Undoubtedly, so long as Madame remained on English territory, I would hold my peace : but from the very moment she stepped on French ground, and now that we have received her in the name of the prince, I warn you, that at the first mark of disrespect which you, in your insane attachment, shall exhibit towards the royal house of France, I shall have one of two courses to follow ;—either I declare, in the presence of every one, your madness with which you are now affected, and I get you ignominiously committed to England ; or, if you prefer it, I will run my dagger through your throat, in the presence of all here. This second alternative seems to me the least disagreeable, and I think I shall hold to it."

Buckingham had become paler than the lace collar around his neck. "M. de Bragelonne," he said, "is it, indeed, a gentleman who is speaking to me?"

"Yes ; only the gentleman is speaking to a madman. Get cured, my lord, and he will hold quite another language to you."

"But M. de Bragelonne," murmured the duke, in a voice half-choked, and putting his hand to his neck,—"Do you not see I am dying."

"If your death were to take place at this moment, my lord," replied Raoul, with unruffled composure, "I should, indeed, regard it as a great happiness, for this circumstance would prevent all kinds of evil remarks ;

not alone about yourself, but also about those illustrious persons whom your devotion is compromising in so absurd a manner."

"You are right, you are right," said the young man, almost beside himself. "Yes, yes ; better to die, than to suffer as I do, at this moment." And he grasped a beautiful dagger, the handle of which was inlaid with precious stones, and which he half drew from his breast.

Raoul thrust his hand aside. "Be careful what you do," he said, "if you do not kill yourself, you commit a ridiculous action ; and if you were to kill yourself, you sprinkle blood upon the nuptial robe of the princess of England."

Buckingham remained a minute gasping for breath ; during this interval his lips quivered, his features worked convulsively, and his eyes wandered, as though in delirium. Then suddenly, he said, "M. de Bragelonne, I know nowhere a nobler mind than yours ; you are, indeed, a worthy son of the most perfect gentleman that ever lived. Keep your tents." And he threw his arms round Raoul's neck. All who were present, astounded at this conduct, which was such as they could hardly have expected, considering the violence of the one adversary, and the determination of the other, began immediately to clap their hands, and a thousand cheers and joyful shouts arose from all sides. De Guiche, in his turn, embraced Buckingham somewhat against his inclination ; but, at all events, he did embrace him. This was the signal for French and English to do the same ; and they who, until that moment, had looked at each other with restless uncertainty, fraternized on the spot. In the meantime, the procession of the princess arrived, and, had it not been for Bragelonne, two armies would have been engaged together in conflict, and blood have been shed upon the flowers with which the ground was covered. At the appearance, however, of the banners borne at the head of the procession, quiet was restored.

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## CHAPTER LXXXVI.

### NIGHT.

CONCORD had returned to resume its place amidst the tents. English and French rivalled each other in their devotion and courteous attention to the two illustrious travellers. The English forwarded to the French basket of flowers, of which they had made a plentiful provision to greet the arrival of the young princess ; the French, in return, invited the English to supper, which was to be given the next day. Congratulations were poured in upon the princess everywhere during her journey. From the respect paid her on all sides, she seemed like a queen ; and from the adoration with which she was treated by some two or three, she seemed like an object of worship. The queen-mother gave the French the most affectionate reception. France was her native country, and she had suffered too much unhappiness in England, for England to have made her forge France. She taught her daughter, then, by her own affection for it, that love for a country where they had both been hospitably received, and where a brilliant future was being opened before them. After the public entrance was over, and the spectators in the streets had somewhat dispersed, and the sound of the music and cheering of the crowd could be heard only in the distance ; when the night had closed in, wrapping, with its star-covered mantle, the sea, the harbour, the town, and surrounding country. De Guiche, still excited by the great event of the day, returned to his tent.

and seated himself upon one of the stools with so profound an expression of distress, that Bragelonne kept his eyes fixed on him until he heard him sigh, and then he approached him. The count had thrown himself back on his seat, leaning his shoulders against the partition of the tent, and remained thus, his face buried in his hands, and with heaving chest and restless limbs.

"You are suffering?" asked Raoul.

"Cruelly."

"Bodily, I suppose?"

"Yes ; bodily."

"This has indeed been a harassing day," continued the young man, his eyes fixed upon his friend.

"Yes ; a night's rest will restore me."

"Shall I leave you?"

"No ; I wish to talk to you."

"You shall not speak to me, Guiche, until you have first answered my questions."

"Proceed then."

"You will be frank with me?"

"As I always am."

"Can you imagine why Buckingham has been so violent?"

"I suspect why."

"Because he is in love with Madame, is it not?"

"One could almost swear it, to see him."

"You are mistaken ; there is nothing of the kind."

"It is you who are mistaken, Raoul ; I have read his distress in his eyes, in his every gesture and action the whole day."

"You are a poet, my dear count, and find subjects for your muse everywhere."

"I can perceive love clearly enough."

"Where it does not exist?"

"Nay, where it does exist."

"Do you not think you are deceiving yourself, Guiche?"

"I am convinced of what I say," said the count.

"Now, inform me, count," asked Raoul, fixing a penetrating look upon him, "what has happened to render you so clear-sighted?"

Guiche hesitated for a moment, and then answered, "Self-love, I suppose."

"Self-love is a very long word, Guiche."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, generally, you are less out of spirits than seems to be the case this evening."

"I am fatigued."

"Listen to me, dear Guiche ; we have been campaigners together ; we have been on horseback for eighteen hours at a time, and our horses even dying from fatigue, or from sheer exhaustion, or hunger, have fallen beneath us, and yet we have laughed at our mishaps. Believe me, it is not fatigue which saddens you to-night."

"It is annoyance, then."

"What annoyance?"—"That of this evening."

"The mad conduct of the Duke of Buckingham, do you mean?"

"Of course ; is it not vexatious for us, the representatives of our sovereign master, to witness the devotion of an Englishman to our future mistress, the second lady in point of rank in the kingdom?"

"Yes, you're right ; but I do not think any danger is to be apprehended from Buckingham."

"No ; still, he is intrusive. Did he not, on his arrival here, almost succeed in creating a disturbance between the English and ourselves ; and, had it not been for you, for your admirable prudence, for your singular decision of character, swords would have been drawn in the very streets of the town."

"You observe, however, that he has changed."

"Yes, certainly ; but it is that which amazes me so much. You spoke to him in a low tone of voice, what did you say to him ? You think he loves her ; you admit that such a passion does not give way readily. He does not love her, then !" De Guiche pronounced the latter words with so marked an expression that Raoul raised his head. The noble character of the young man's countenance expressed a displeasure which could easily be read.

"What I said to him, count," replied Raoul, "I will repeat to you. Listen to me. I said, 'You are regarding with wistful feelings, and with most injurious desire, the sister of your prince,—her to whom you are not affianced, who is not, who can never be, anything to you ; you are outraging those who, like ourselves, have come to seek a young girl to lead her to her husband.'"

"You spoke to him in that manner ?" asked Guiche, colouring.

"In those very terms ; I even added more. 'How would you regard us,' I said, 'if you were to perceive among us a man mad enough, disloyal enough, to entertain other than sentiments of the most perfect respect for a princess who is the destined wife of our master ?'"

These words were so applicable to De Guiche that he turned pale, and, overcome by a sudden agitation, was barely able to stretch out one hand mechanically towards Raoul, as he covered his eyes and face with the other.

"But," continued Raoul, not interrupted by this movement of his friend, "Heaven be praised, the French, who are pronounced to be thoughtless and indiscreet, reckless even, are capable of bringing a calm and sound judgment to bear on matters of such high importance. I added even more, for I said, 'Learn, my lord, that we gentlemen of France devote ourselves to our sovereigns by sacrificing for them our affections, as well as our fortunes and our lives ; and whenever it may chance to happen that the tempter suggests one of those vile thoughts which set the heart on fire, we extinguish that flame, even were it done by shedding our blood for the purpose. Thus it is that the honour of three persons is saved, our country's, our master's and our own. It is thus that we act, you grace ; it is thus that every man of honour ought to act.' In this manner my dear Guiche," continued Raoul, "I addressed the Duke of Buckingham ; and he admitted and resigned himself unresistingly to my arguments."

De Guiche, who had hitherto sat leaning forward while Raoul was speaking, drew himself up, his eyes glancing proudly ; he seized Raoul's hand, his face, which had been as cold as ice, seemed on fire. "And you spoke right well," he said, in a voice half choked ; "you are indeed friend, Raoul. And now, I entreat you, leave me to myself."

"Do you wish it ?"

"Yes ; I need repose. Many things have agitated me to-day both in mind and body ; when you return to-morrow I shall no longer be the same man."

"I leave you, then," said Raoul, as he withdrew. The count advanced a step towards his friend, and pressed him warmly in his arms. But in this friendly pressure Raoul could detect the nervous agitation of a great internal conflict.

The night was clear, starlight, and splendid: the tempest had passed away, and the warmth of the sun had restored life, peace, and security everywhere. A few light fleecy clouds were floating in the heavens, and indicated from their appearance a continuance of beautiful weather, tempered by a gentle breeze from the east. Upon the large square in front of the hôtel, the large shadows of the tents, intersected by the brilliant moonbeams, formed as it were a huge mosaic of black and white flagstones. Soon, however, the whole town was wrapped in slumber; a feeble light still glimmered in Madame's apartment, which looked out upon the square, and the soft rays from the expiring lamp seemed to be the image of the calm sleep of a young girl, hardly yet sensible of existence, and in whom the flame of life sinks down as sleep steals over the body. Bragelonne quitted the tent with the slow and measured step of a man curious to observe, but anxious not to be seen. Sheltered behind the thick curtains of his own tent, embracing with a glance the whole square, he noticed that, after a few moments' pause, the curtains of De Guiche's tent were agitated, and then drawn partially aside. Behind them he could perceive the shadow of De Guiche, his eyes glistening in the obscurity, fastened ardently upon the princess's sitting apartment, which was partially lighted by the lamp in the inner room. That soft light which illumined the windows was the count's star. The fervent aspirations of his nature could be read in his eyes. Raoul, concealed in the shadow, divined the many passionate thoughts which established, between the tent of the young ambassador and the balcony of the princess, a mysterious and magical bond of sympathy—a bond created by thoughts imprinted with so much strength and persistence of will, that they certainly besought that happy and loving dreams might alight upon the perfumed couch, which the count with the eyes of his soul devoured so eagerly. But De Guiche and Raoul were not the only watchers. The window of one of the houses looking on the square was opened too, the window of the house where Buckingham resided. By the aid of the rays of light which issued from this latter window, the profile of the duke could be distinctly seen, as he indolently reclined upon the carved balcony with its velvet hangings; he also was breathing in the direction of the princess's apartment his prayers and the wild visions of his love.

Bragelonne could not resist smiling, as, thinking of Madame, he said to himself, "Hers is, indeed, a heart well besieged," and then added, compassionately, as he thought of Monsieur, "and he is a husband well threatened too; it is a good thing for him that he is a prince of such high rank, and that he has an army to win for him that which is his own." Bragelonne watched for some time the conduct of the two lovers, listened to the loud and uncivil slumbers of Manicamp, who snored as imperiously as though he had his blue and gold, instead of his violet suit, and then turned towards the night breeze which bore towards him, he seemed to think, the distant song of a nightingale; and, after having laid in a due provision of melancholy, another nocturnal malady, he retired to rest, thinking, that with regard to his own love affair, perhaps four or six eyes, quite as ardent as those of De Guiche and Buckingham, were coveting his own idol in the château at Blois. "And Mademoiselle de Montalais is by no means a very safe garrison," said he to himself, as he sighed aloud.

## CHAPTER LXXXVII.

## FROM HAVRE TO PARIS.

THE next day the *fêtes* took place, accompanied by all the pomp and animation which the resources of the town and the natural disposition of men's minds could supply. During the last few hours spent in Havre, every preparation for the departure had been made. After Madame had taken leave of the English fleet, and, once again, had saluted the country in saluting its flags, she entered the carriage prepared for her, surrounded by a brilliant escort. De Guiche had hoped that the Duke of Buckingham would accompany the admiral to England; but Buckingham succeeded in demonstrating to the queen that there would be great impropriety in allowing Madame to proceed to Paris almost entirely alone. As soon as it had been settled that Buckingham was to accompany Madame, the young duke selected a court of gentlemen and officers to form part of his own suite, so that it was almost an army which proceeded towards Paris, scattering gold, and exciting the liveliest demonstrations as they passed through the different towns and villages on the route. The weather was very fine. France is a beautiful country, especially along the route by which the procession passed. Spring cast its flowers and its perfumed foliage upon their path. Normandy, with its vast variety of vegetation, its blue skies and silver rivers, displayed itself in all the loveliness of a Paradise for the new sister of the king. *Fêtes* and brilliant displays received them everywhere along the line of march. De Guiche and Buckingham forgot everything; De Guiche in his anxiety to prevent any fresh attempts on the part of the duke, and Buckingham, in his desire to awaken in the heart of the princess a softer remembrance of the country, to which the recollection of many happy days belonged. But, alas! the poor duke could perceive that the image of that country so cherished by himself became, from day to day, more and more effaced in Madame's mind, in exact proportion as her affection for France became more deeply engraved on her heart. In fact it was not difficult to perceive that his most devoted attention awakened no acknowledgment, and that the grace with which he rode one of his most fiery horses was thrown away, for it was only casually and by the merest accident that the princess's eyes were turned towards him. In vain did he try, in order to fix upon himself one of those looks, which were thrown carelessly around, or bestowed elsewhere, to produce from the animal he rode its greatest display of strength, speed, temper, and address; in vain did he, by exciting his horse almost to madness, spur him, at the risk of dashing himself in pieces against the trees, or of rolling in the ditches, over the gates and barriers which they passed, or down the steep declivities of the hills. Madame, whose attention had been aroused by the noise, turned her head for a moment to observe the cause of it, and then, slightly smiling, again turned round to her faithful guardians, Raoul and De Guiche, who were quietly riding at her carriage doors. Buckingham felt himself a prey to all the tortures of jealousy; an unknown, unheard-of anguish glided into his veins, and laid siege to his heart; and then, as if to show that he knew the folly of his conduct, and that he wished to correct, by the humblest submission, his flights of absurdity, he mastered his horse, and compelled him, reeking with sweat and flecked with foam, to champ his bit close beside the carriage, amidst the crowd of courtiers. Occasionally he obtained a word from Madame as a recompense, and yet this word seemed almost a reproach to him.

"That is well, my lord," she said, "now you are reasonable."

Or from Raoul, "Your grace is killing your horse."

Buckingham listened patiently to Raoul's remarks, for he instinctively felt, without having had any proof that such was the case, that Raoul checked the display of De Guiche's feelings, and that, had it not been for Raoul, some mad act or proceeding, either of the count, or of Buckingham himself, would have brought about an open rupture, or a disturbance, and perhaps even exile itself. From the moment of that excited conversation which the two young men had had in front of the tents at Havre, when Raoul had made the duke perceive the impropriety of his conduct, Buckingham had felt himself attracted towards Raoul almost in spite of himself. He often entered into conversation with him, and it was nearly always to talk to him either of his father or of D'Artagnan, their mutual friend, in whose praise Buckingham was nearly as enthusiastic as Raoul. Raoul endeavoured, as much as possible, to make the conversation turn upon this subject in De Wardes' presence, who had, during the whole journey, been exceedingly annoyed at the superior position taken by Bragelonne, and especially by his influence over De Guiche. De Wardes had that keen and observant penetration which all evil natures possess, and he had immediately remarked De Guiche's melancholy, and the nature of his regard for the princess. Instead, however, of treating the subject with the same reserve which Raoul had practised; instead of regarding with that respect, which was their due, the obligations and duties of society, De Wardes resolutely attacked in the count that ever-sounding chord of juvenile audacity and egotistical pride. It happened one evening, during a halt at Nantes, that while De Guiche and De Wardes were leaning against a barrier, engaged in conversation, Buckingham and Raoul were talking together as they walked up and down. Manicamp was engaged in devotional attentions to the princesses, who already treated him without any reserve, on account of his versatile fancy, his frank courtesy of manner, and conciliatory disposition.

"Confess," said De Wardes, "that you are really ill, and that your pedagogue of a friend has not succeeded in curing you."

"I do not understand you," said the count.

"And yet it is easy enough; you are dying for love."

"You are mad, De Wardes."

"Madness it would be, I admit, if Madame were really indifferent to your martyrdom; but she takes so much notice of it, observes it to such an extent, that she compromises herself, and I tremble lest, on our arrival at Paris, M. de Bragelonne may not denounce both of you."

"For shame, De Wardes, again attacking De Bragelonne."

"Come, come, a truce to child's play," replied the count's evil genius, in an undertone; "you know, as well as I do, what I mean. Besides, you must have observed how the princess's glance softens as she looks at you;—you can tell, by the very inflection of her voice, what pleasure she takes in listening to you, and can feel how thoroughly she appreciates the verses you recite to her. You cannot deny, too, that every morning she tells you how indifferently she slept the previous night."

"True, De Wardes, quite true; but what good is there in your telling me all that?"—"Is it not important to know the exact position of affairs?"

"No, no; not when I am a witness of things which are enough to drive me mad."

"Stay, stay," said De Wardes; "look, she calls you; do you understand? Profit by the occasion, for your pedagogue is not here."

De Guiche could not resist ; an invincible attraction drew him towards the princess. De Wardes smiled as he saw him withdraw.

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said Raoul, suddenly stepping across the barrier against which, the previous moment, the two friends had been leaning ; "the pedagogue is here, and has overheard you."

De Wardes, at the sound of Raoul's voice, which he recognised without having occasion to look at him, half drew his sword.

"Put up your sword," said Raoul ; "you know perfectly well that, until our journey is at an end, every demonstration of that nature is useless. Why do you distil into the heart of the man you term your friend all the bitterness which infects your own ? As regards myself, you wish to arouse a feeling of deep dislike against a man of honour—my father's friend, and my own ; and as for the count, you wish him to love one who is destined for your master. Really, monsieur, I should regard you as a coward, and a traitor too, if I did not, with greater justice, regard you as a madman."

"Monsieur," exclaimed De Wardes, exasperated, "I was deceived, I find, in terming you a pedagogue ; the tone you assume, and the style which is peculiarly your own, is that of a Jesuit, and not of a gentleman. Discontinue, I beg, whenever I am present, this style I complain of, and the tone also. I hate M. d'Artagnan because he was guilty of a cowardly act towards my father."

"You lie, monsieur !" said Raoul, coolly.

"You give me the lie, monsieur ?" exclaimed De Wardes.

"Why not, if what you assert be untrue ?"

"You give me the lie, and do not draw your sword ?"

"I have resolved, monsieur, not to kill you until Madame shall have been delivered up into her husband's hands."

"Kill me ! Believe me, monsieur, your schoolmaster's rod does not kill so easily."

"No," replied Raoul, sternly, "but M. d'Artagnan's sword kills ; and, not only do I possess his sword, but he has himself taught me how to use it ; and with that sword, when a befitting time arrives, I shall avenge his name—a name you have so dishonoured."

"Take care, monsieur," exclaimed De Wardes ; "if you do not immediately give me satisfaction, I will avail myself of every means to revenge myself."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Buckingham, suddenly appearing upon the scene of action, "that is a threat which sounds like assassination, and would, therefore, ill become a gentleman."

"What did you say, my lord ?" said De Wardes, turning round towards him.

"I said, monsieur, that the words you have just spoken are displeasing to my English ears."

"Very well, monsieur, if what you say is true," exclaimed De Wardes, thoroughly incensed, "I shall at least find in you one who will not escape me. Understand my words as you like."

"I understand them in the manner they cannot but be understood," replied Buckingham, with that haughty tone which characterised him, and which, even in ordinary conversation, gave a tone of defiance to everything he said. "M. de Bragelonne is my friend ; you insult M. de Bragelonne, and you shall give me satisfaction for that insult."

De Wardes cast a look upon De Bragelonne, who, faithful to the character he had assumed, remained calm and unmoved, even after the duke's defiance.

"It would seem that I did not insult M. de Bragelonne, since M. de Bragelonne, who carries a sword by his side, does not consider himself insulted."

"At all events, you insult some one?"

"Yes, I insulted M. d'Artagnan," resumed De Wardes, who had observed that this was the only means of stinging Raoul, so as to awaken his anger.

"That, then," said Buckingham, "is another matter."

"Precisely so," said De Wardes; "it is the province of M. d'Artagnan's friends to defend him."

"I am entirely of your opinion," replied the duke, who had regained all his indifference of manner. "If M. de Bragelonne were offended, I could not reasonably be expected to espouse his quarrel, since he is himself here; but when you say that it is a quarrel of M. d'Artagnan——"

"You will of course leave me to deal with the matter," said De Wardes.

"Nay, the very contrary, for I draw my sword," said Buckingham, unsheathing it as he spoke; "for, if M. d'Artagnan injured your father, he rendered, or at least did all that he could to render, a great service to mine."

De Wardes seemed thunderstruck.

"M. d'Artagnan," continued Buckingham, "is the bravest gentleman I know. I shall be delighted, as I owe him many personal obligations, to settle them with you, by crossing my sword with yours." At the same moment Buckingham drew his sword gracefully from its scabbard, saluted Raoul, and put himself on guard.

De Wardes advanced a step to meet him.

"Stay, gentlemen," said Raoul, advancing towards them, and placing his own drawn sword between the combatants; "the affair is hardly worth the trouble of blood being shed almost in the presence of the princess. M. de Wardes speaks ill of M. d'Artagnan, with whom he is not even acquainted."

"What, monsieur!" said De Wardes, setting his teeth hard together, and resting the point of his sword on the toe of his boot, "do you assert that I do not know M. d'Artagnan?"

"Certainly not; you do not know him," replied Raoul, coldly, "and you are even not aware where he is to be found."

"Not know where he is?"

"Such must be the case, since you fix your quarrel with him upon strangers, instead of seeking M. d'Artagnan where he is to be found." De Wardes turned pale. "Well, monsieur," continued Raoul, "I will tell you where M. d'Artagnan is: he is now in Paris; when on duty, he is to be met with at the Louvre; when not so, in the Rue des Lombards. M. d'Artagnan can be easily discovered at either of those two places. Having, therefore, as you assert, so many causes of complaint against him, you do not show your courage in not seeking him out, to afford him an opportunity of giving you that satisfaction you seem to ask of every one but of himself." De Wardes passed his hand across his forehead, which was covered with perspiration. "For shame, M. de Wardes! so quarrelsome a disposition is hardly becoming after the publication of the edicts against duels. Pray think of that. The king will be incensed at our disobedience, particularly at such a time; and his majesty will be in the right."

"Mere excuses!" murmured De Wardes, "mere pretexts!"

"Really, my dear M. de Wardes," resumed Raoul, "such remarks are the merest idle talk; you know very well that the Duke of Buckingham is

a man of undoubted courage, who has already fought ten duels, and will probably fight eleven. His name alone is significant enough. As far as I am concerned, you are well aware that I can fight also. I fought at Sens, at Bleneau, at the Dunes in front of the artillery, a hundred paces in front of the line, while you—I say this parenthetically—were a hundred paces behind it. True it is, that on that occasion there were by far too great a concourse of persons present for your courage to be observed, and on that account, perhaps, you did not reveal it ; while here, it would be a display, and would excite remark,—you wish that others should talk about you, in what manner you do not care. Do not depend upon me, M. de Wardes, to assist you in your designs, for I shall certainly not afford you that pleasure.”

“Sensibly observed,” said Buckingham, putting up his sword, “and I ask your forgiveness, M. de Bragelonne, for having allowed myself to yield to a first impulse.”

De Wardes, however, on the contrary, perfectly furious, bounded forward, and raised his sword threateningly against Raoul, who had scarcely time to put himself in a posture of defence.

“Take care, monsieur,” said Bragelonne, tranquilly, “or you will put out one of my eyes.”

“You will not fight, then ?” said De Wardes.

“Not at this moment ; but this I promise to do, immediately on our arrival at Paris : I will conduct you to M. d’Artagnan, to whom you shall detail all the causes of complaint you have against him. M. d’Artagnan will solicit the king’s permission to measure swords with you. The king will yield his consent, and when you shall have received the sword-thrust in due course, you will consider, in a calmer frame of mind, the precepts of the Gospel, which enjoin forgetfulness of injuries.”

“Ah !” exclaimed De Wardes, furious at this imperturbable coolness, “one can clearly see you are half a bastard, M. de Bragelonne.”

Raoul became as pale as death ; his eyes flashed like lightning, and made De Wardes fall back. Buckingham also, who had perceived their expression, threw himself between the two adversaries, whom he expected to see precipitate themselves on each other. De Wardes had reserved this injury for the last ; he clasped his sword tight in his hand, and awaited the encounter. “You are right, monsieur,” said Raoul, mastering his emotion, “I am only acquainted with my father’s name ; but I know too well that the Comte de la Fère is too upright and honourable a man to allow me to fear for a single moment that there is, as you seem to say, any stain upon my birth. My ignorance, therefore, of my mother’s name is a misfortune for me, and not a reproach. You are deficient in loyalty of conduct ; you are wanting in courtesy, in reproaching me with misfortune. It matters little, however, the insult has been given, and I consider myself insulted accordingly. It is quite understood, then, that after you shall have received satisfaction from M. d’Artagnan, you will settle your quarrel with me.”

“I admire your prudence, monsieur,” replied De Wardes, with a bitter smile ; “a little while ago you promised me a sword-thrust from M. d’Artagnan, and now, after I shall have received his, you offer me one from yourself.”

“Do not disturb yourself,” replied Raoul, with concentrated anger ; “in all affairs of that nature, M. d’Artagnan is exceedingly skilful, and I will beg him as a favour to treat you as he did your father ; in other words, to spare your life at least, so as to leave me the pleasure, after your recovery,

killing you outright ; for you have a bad heart, M. de Wardes, and in any truth, too many precautions cannot be taken against you."

"I shall take my precautions against you," said De Wardes, "be assured of it."

"Allow me, monsieur," said Buckingham, "to translate your remark by piece of advice I am about to give M. de Bragelonne : M. de Bragelonne, wear a cuirass."

De Wardes clenched his hands. "Ah !" said he, "you two gentlemen tend to wait until you have taken that precaution before you measure your swords against mine."

"Very well, monsieur," said Raoul, "since you positively will have it, let us settle the affair now." And, drawing his sword, he advanced towards De Wardes.

"What are you going to do?" said Buckingham.

"Be easy," said Raoul, "it will not be very long."

De Wardes placed himself on his guard ; their swords crossed. De Wardes flew upon Raoul with such impetuosity, that at the first clashing of the steel blades Buckingham clearly saw that Raoul was only trifling with his adversary. Buckingham stepped aside, and watched the struggle. Raoul was as calm as if he were handling a foil, instead of a sword ; having retreated a step, he parried three or four fierce thrusts which De Wardes made at him, caught the sword of the latter within his own, sending it flying twenty paces the other side of the barrier. Then as De Wardes stood disarmed and astounded at his defeat, Raoul sheathed his sword, seized him by the collar and the waistband, and hurled him also to the other side of the barrier, trembling and mad with rage.

"We shall meet again," murmured De Wardes, rising from the ground and picking up his sword.

"I have done nothing for the last hour," said Raoul, "but say the same thing." Then, turning towards the duke, he said, "I entreat you to be content about this affair ; I am ashamed to have gone so far, but my anger carried me away, and I ask your forgiveness for it ;—forget it, too."

"Dear viscount," said the duke, pressing within his own the vigorous and valiant hand of his companion, "allow me, on the contrary, to remember it, and to look after your safety ; that man is dangerous,—he will kill you."

"My father," replied Raoul, "lived for twenty years under the menace of a much more formidable enemy, and he still lives."

"Your father had good friends, viscount."

"Yes," sighed Raoul, "such friends indeed that none are now left like them."

"Do not say that, I beg, at the very moment I offer you my friendship," and Buckingham opened his arms to embrace Raoul, who delightedly received the proffered alliance. "In my family," added Buckingham, "you are aware, M. de Bragelonne, that we die to save those we love."

"I know it well, duke," replied Raoul.

## CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT THE CHEVALIER DE LORRAINE THOUGHT OF MADAME.

Nothing further interrupted the journey. Under a pretext which was easily remarked, M. de Wardes went forward in advance of the others. He took Manicamp with him, for his equable and dreamy disposition

acted as a counterpoise to his own. It is a subject of remark, that quarrelsome and restless characters invariably seek the companionship of gentle, timorous dispositions, as if the former sought, in the contrast, a repose for their own ill-humour, and the latter a protection against their own weakness. Buckingham and Bragelonne, admitting De Guiche into their friendship, joined, in concert with him, the praises of the princess during the whole of the journey. Bragelonne had, however, insisted that their three voices should be in concert, instead of singing in solo parts, as De Guiche and his rival seemed to have acquired a dangerous habit of doing. This style of harmony pleased the queen-mother exceedingly, but it was not perhaps so agreeable to the young princess, who was an incarnation of coquetry, and who, without any fear as far as her own voice was concerned, sought opportunities of so perilously distinguishing herself. She possessed one of those fearless and incautious dispositions which find gratification in an excess of sensitiveness of feeling, and for whom, also, danger has a certain fascination. And so her glances, her smiles, her toilette, an inexhaustible armoury of weapons of offence, were showered down upon the three young men with overwhelming force; and, from her well-stored arsenal issued glances, kindly recognitions, and a thousand other little charming attentions which were intended to strike at long range the gentlemen who formed the escort, the townspeople, the officers of the different cities she passed through, pages, populace, and servants. It was wholesale slaughter, a general devastation. By the time Madame arrived at Paris, she had reduced to slavery about a hundred thousand lovers: and brought in her train to Paris, half-a-dozen men who were almost mad about her, and two who were quite out of their minds. Raoul was the only person who divined the power of this woman's attraction, and, as his heart was already engaged, he arrived in the capital full of indifference and distrust. Occasionally during the journey he conversed with the queen of England respecting the power of fascination which Madame possessed, and the mother, whom so many misfortune and deceptions had taught experience, replied: "Henrietta was sure to be illustrious in one way or another, whether born in a palace or born in obscurity; for she is a woman of great imagination, capricious, and self-willed." De Wardes and Manicamp, in their character of couriers, had announced the princess's arrival. The procession was met at Nanterme by a brilliant escort of cavaliers and carriages. It was Monsieur himself, who, followed by the Chevalier de Lorraine and by his favourites, the latter being themselves followed by a portion of the king's military household, had arrived to meet his affianced bride. At St. Germain, the princess and her mother had changed their heavy travelling carriage, somewhat impaired by the journey, for a light, richly-decorated chariot drawn by six horses with white and gold harness. Seated in this open carriage, though upon a throne, and beneath a parasol of embroidered silk, fringed with feathers, sat the young and lovely princess, on whose beaming face were reflected the softened rose-tints which suited her delicate skin to perfection. Monsieur, on reaching the carriage, was struck by her beauty; he showed his admiration in so marked a manner that the Chevalier de Lorraine shrugged his shoulders as he listened to his compliments, while Buckingham and De Guiche were almost heart broken. After the usual courtesies had been rendered, and the ceremony completed, the procession slowly resumed the road to Paris. The presentations had been carelessly made, and Buckingham, with the rest of the English gentlemen, had been introduced to Monsieur, from whom they had received but a very

erent attention. But during their progress, as he observed that the e devoted himself with his accustomed earnestness to the carriage-r, he asked the Chevalier de Lorraine, his inseparable companion, "Who is that cavalier?"

He was presented to your highness a short time since ; it is the hand- ne Duke of Buckingham."

"Yes, yes, I remember."

Madame's knight," added the favourite, with an inflection of the voice ich envious minds can alone give to the simplest phrases.

"What do you say?" replied the prince.

"I said, 'Madame's knight.'"

"Has she a recognised knight, then?"

"One would think you can judge of that for yourself; look, only, how ey are laughing and flirting. All three of them."

"What do you mean by all three?"

"Do you not see that De Guiche is one of the party?"

"Yes, I see. But what does that prove?"

"That Madame has two admirers instead of one."

"You poison everything, viper."

"I poison nothing. Ah! your royal highness's mind is very perverted. he honours of the kingdom of France are being paid to your wife, and ou are not satisfied."

The Duke of Orleans dreaded the satirical humour of the Chevalier de orraine whenever he found it reached a certain degree of bitterness, and e changed the conversation abruptly. "The princess is pretty," said he ery negligently, as if he were speaking of a stranger.

"Yes," replied the chevalier, in the same tone.

"You say 'yes' like a 'no.' She has very beautiful black eyes."

"Yes, but small."

"That is so, but they are brilliant. She has a good figure."

"Her figure is a little spoilt, my lord."

"I do not deny it. She has a noble appearance."

"Yes, but her face is thin."

"I thought her teeth beautiful."

"They can easily be seen, for her mouth is large enough. Decidedly I vas wrong, my lord ; you are certainly handsomer than your wife."

"But do you think me as handsome as Buckingham?"

"Certainly, and he thinks so, too ; for, look, my lord, he is redoubling his attentions, to Madame, to prevent your effacing the impression he has made."

Monsieur made a movement of impatience, but as he noticed a smile of triumph pass across the chevalier's lips, he drew up his horse to a foot-pace. "Why," said he, "should I occupy myself any longer about my cousin? Do I not already know her? Were we not brought up together? Did I not see her at the Louvre when she was quite a child?"

"A great change has taken place in her since then, prince. At the period you allude to, she was somewhat less brilliant, and somewhat less proud too. One evening, particularly, you may remember, my lord, the king refused to dance with her, because he thought her plain and badly dressed!"

These words made the Duke of Orleans frown. It was by no means flattering for him to marry a princess of whom, when young, the king had not thought much. He might probably have replied, but at this moment De Guiche quitted the carriage to join the prince. He had remarked the

prince and the chevalier together, and full of anxious attention ; he seemed to try and guess the nature of the remarks which they had just exchanged. The chevalier, whether he had some treacherous object in view, or from imprudence, did not take the trouble to dissimulate. "Count," he said, "you're a man of excellent taste."

"Thank you for the compliment," replied De Guiche ; "but why do you say that ?"

"Well, I appeal to his highness !"

"No doubt of it," said Monsieur, "and Guiche knows perfectly well that I regard him as a most finished cavalier."

"Well, since that is decided, I resume. You have been in the princess's society, count, for the last eight days, have you not ?"

"Yes," replied De Guiche, colouring in spite of himself.

"Well, then, tell us frankly, what do you think of her personal appearance ?"

"Of her personal appearance ?" returned De Guiche, stupefied.

"Yes ; of her appearance, of her mind, of herself, in fact."

Astounded by this question, De Guiche hesitated answering.

"Come, come, De Guiche," resumed the chevalier, laughingly, "tell us your opinion frankly, the prince commands it."

"Yes, yes," said the prince, "be frank."

De-Guiche stammered out a few unintelligible words.

"I am perfectly well aware," returned Monsieur, "that the subject is a delicate one, but you know you can tell me everything. What do you think of her ?"

In order to avoid betraying his real thoughts, De Guiche had recourse to the only defence which a man taken by surprise really has, and accordingly told an untruth. "I do not find Madame," he said, "either good or bad looking, yet rather good than bad looking."

"What ! count," exclaimed the chevalier, "you, who went into such ecstasies, and uttered so many exclamations at the sight of her portrait."

De Guiche coloured violently. Very fortunately his horse, which was slightly restive, enabled him by a sudden plunge to conceal his agitation. "What portrait ?" he murmured, joining them again. The chevalier had not taken his eyes off him.

"Yes, the portrait. Was not the miniature a good likeness ?"

"I do not remember. I have forgotten the portrait ; it has quite escaped my recollection."

"And yet it made a very marked impression upon you," said the chevalier.

"That is not unlikely."

"Is she clever, at all events ?" inquired the duke.

"I believe so, my lord."

"Is M. de Buckingham so too ?" said the chevalier.

"I do not know."

"My own opinion is that he must be," replied the chevalier, "for he makes Madame laugh, and she seems to take no little pleasure in his society, which never happens to a clever woman when in the company of a simpleton."

"Of course, then, he must be clever," said De Guiche, simply.

At this moment Raoul opportunely arrived, seeing how De Guiche was pressed by his dangerous questioner, to whom he addressed a remark, and so changed the conversation. The *entrée* was brilliant and joyous.

The king, in honour of his brother, had directed that the festivities

ould be on a scale of the greatest magnificence. Madame and her other alighted at the Louvre, where during their exile, they had so pomily submitted to obscurity, misery, and privations of every description. That palace, which had been so inhospitable a residence for the unhappy daughter of Henry IV., the naked walls, the sunken floorings, the pilings covered with cobwebs, the vast but broken chimney-places, the old hearths on which the charity extended to them by parliament had hardly permitted a fire to glow, was completely altered in appearance. The richest hangings and the thickest carpets, glistening flagstones, and pictures, with their richly gilded frames ; in every direction could be seen arabesques, mirrors, and furniture and fittings of the most sumptuous character ; in every direction also were guards of the proudest military bearing with floating plumes, crowds of attendants and courtiers in the antechambers and upon the staircases. In the court-yards, where the grass had formerly been accustomed to grow, as if the ungrateful Mazarin had thought it a good idea to let the Parisians perceive, that solitude and disorder were, with misery and despair, the proper accompaniments of a fallen monarchy ; the immense court-yards, formerly silent and desolate, were now thronged with courtiers, whose horses were pacing and prancing to and fro. The carriages were filled with young and beautiful women, who awaited the opportunity of saluting, as she passed, the daughter of that daughter of France, who, during her widowhood and her exile, had sometimes gone without wood for her fire, or bread for her table, whom the meanest attendants at the château had treated with indifference and contempt. And so, Madame Henrietta once more returned to the Louvre, with her heart more swollen with grief and bitter recollections than her laughter, whose disposition was fickle and forgetful, returned to it with triumph and delight. She knew but too well that present brilliant reception was paid to the happy mother of a king restored to his throne, and that throne second to none in Europe, while the worse than indifferent reception she had before met with was paid to her, the daughter of Henry IV., as a punishment for having been unhappy. After the princesses had been installed in their apartments and had rested themselves, the gentlemen who had formed their escort having, in like manner, recovered from their fatigue, they resumed their accustomed habits and occupations. Raoul began by setting off to see his father, who had left for Blois. He then tried to see M. d'Artagnan, who, however, being engaged in the organization of a military household for the king, could not be found anywhere. Bragelonne next sought out De Guiche, but the comte was occupied in a long conference with his tailors and with Manicamp, which consumed his whole time. With the Duke of Buckingham he fared still worse, for the duke was purchasing horses after horses, diamonds upon diamonds. He monopolised every embroiderer, jeweller, and tailor that Paris could boast of. Between De Guiche and himself a vigorous contest ensued, invariably a most courteous one, in which, in order to insure success, the duke was ready to spend a million ; while the Maréchal de Grammont had only allowed his son 60,000 francs. So Buckingham laughed and spent his money. Guiche groaned in despair, and would have shown it more violently, had it not been for the advice De Bragelonne gave him.

"A million!" repeated De Guiche daily ; "I must submit. Why will not the maréchal advance me a portion of my patrimony?"

"Because you will throw it away," said Raoul.

"What can that matter to him? If I am to die of it, I shall die of it, and then I shall need nothing further."

"But what need is there to die?" said Raoul.

"I do not wish to be conquered in elegance by an Englishman."

"My dear comte," said Manicamp, "elegance is not a costly commodity, it is only a very difficult one."

"Yes, but difficult things cost a good deal of money, and I have only got 60,000 francs."

"A very embarrassing state of things, truly," said De Wardes; "spend as much as Buckingham; there is only 940,000 francs difference."

"Where am I to find them?"—"Get into debt."

"I am so already."—"A greater reason for getting further."

Advice like this resulted in De Guiche becoming excited to such an extent that he committed extravagances where Buckingham only incurred expenses. The rumour of this extravagant profuseness delighted the heart of all the shopkeepers in Paris; from the hotel of the Duke of Buckingham to that of the Comte de Grammont nothing but wonders was dreamed of. While all this was going on, Madame was resting herself, and Bragelonne was engaged in writing to Mademoiselle de la Vallière. He had already despatched four letters, and not an answer to any one of them had been received, when, on the very morning fixed for the marriage ceremony which was to take place in the chapel at the Palais Royal, Raoul, who was dressing, heard his valet announce M. de Malicorne. "What can this Malicorne want with me," thought Raoul; and then said to his valet, "Let him wait."

"It is a gentleman from Blois," said the valet.

"Admit him at once," said Raoul, eagerly.

Malicorne entered as brilliant as a star, and wearing a superb sword by his side. After having saluted Raoul most gracefully, he said: "M. de Bragelonne, I am the bearer of a thousand compliments from a lady to you."

Raoul coloured. "From a lady," said he, "from a lady of Blois?"

"Yes, monsieur; from Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Thank you, monsieur; I recollect you now," said Raoul. "And what does Mademoiselle de Montalais require of me?"

Malicorne drew four letters from his pocket which he offered to Raoul.

"My own letters, is it possible?" he said, turning pale; "my letters and the seals unbroken?"

"Monsieur, your letters did not find, at Blois, the person to whom they were addressed, and so they are now returned to you."

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière has left Blois, then?" exclaimed Raoul.

"Eight days ago."

"Where is she, then?"—"At Paris."

"How was it known that these letters were from me?"

"Mademoiselle de Montalais recognized your handwriting and your seal," said Malicorne.

Raoul coloured and smiled. "Mademoiselle de Montalais is exceedingly amiable," he said; "she is always kind and charming."

"Always, monsieur."

"Surely she could give me some precise information about Mademoiselle de la Vallière. I could never find her in this immense city."

Malicorne drew another packet from his pocket. "You may possibly find in this letter what you are anxious to learn."

Raoul hurriedly broke the seal. The writing was that of Mademoiselle d'Aure, and enclosed were these words:—"Paris, Palais Royal. The day of the nuptial blessing."

"What does this mean?" inquired Raoul of Malicorne; "you probably know?"

"I do, monsieur."

"For pity's sake, tell me, then."—"Impossible, monsieur."

"Why so?"

"Because Mademoiselle Aure has forbidden me to do so."

Raoul looked at his strange companion, and remained silent:—"At least, tell me whether it is fortunate or unfortunate."

"That you will see."—"You are very severe in your reservations."

"Will you grant me a favour, monsieur?" said Malicorne.

"In exchange for that you refuse me?"—"Precisely."

"What is it?"

"I have the greatest desire to see the ceremony, and I have no ticket to admit me, in spite of all the steps I have taken to secure one. Could you get me admitted?"

"Certainly."

"Do me this kindness, then, I entreat."

"Most willingly, monsieur; come with me."

"I am exceedingly indebted to you, monsieur," said Malicorne.

"I thought you were a friend of M. de Manicamp."

"I am, monsieur; but this morning I was with him as he was dressing, and I let a bottle of blacking fall over his new dress, and he flew at me with his sword in his hand, so that I was obliged to make my escape. That is the reason I could not ask him for a ticket; he would have killed me."

"I can believe it," said Raoul. "I know Manicamp is capable of killing a man who has been unfortunate enough to commit the crime you have to reproach yourself with in his eyes, but I will repair the mischief as far as you are concerned; I will but fasten my cloak, and shall then be ready to serve you, not only as a guide, but as an introducer also."

## CHAPTER LXXXIX.

### THE SURPRISE OF MADAME DE MONTALAIS.

MADAME'S marriage was celebrated in the Chapel of the Palais Royal, in the presence of a crowd of courtiers, who had been most scrupulously selected. However, notwithstanding the marked favour which an invitation indicated, Raoul, faithful to his promise to Malicorne, who was so anxious to witness the ceremony, obtained admission for him. After he had fulfilled this engagement, Raoul approached De Guiche, who, as if in contrast with his magnificent costume, exhibited a countenance so utterly cast down by intense grief, that the Duke of Buckingham was the only one present who could contend with him as far as extreme pallor and dejection were concerned.

"Take care, count," said Raoul, approaching his friend, and preparing to support him at the moment the archbishop blessed the married couple. In fact, the Prince of Condé was attentively scrutinising these two images of desolation, standing like caryatides at either side of the nave of the church. The count, consequently, kept a more careful watch over himself. At the termination of the ceremony, the king and queen passed onward towards the grand reception-room, where Madame and her suite were to be presented to them. It was remarked that the king, who had seemed more than surprised at his sister-in-law's appearance, was most flattering

in his compliments to her. Again, it was remarked that the queen-mother fixing a long and thoughtful gaze upon Buckingham, leaned towards Madame de Motteville as though to ask her, "Do you not see how much he resembles his father?" and finally it was remarked that Monsieur watched everybody, and seemed very discontented. After the reception of the princes and ambassadors, Monsieur solicited the king's permission to present to him, as well as to Madame, the persons belonging to their new household.

"Are you aware, vicomte," inquired the Prince de Condé of Raoul, "whether the household has been selected by a person of taste, and whether there are any faces worth looking at?"

"I have not the slightest idea, monseigneur," replied Raoul.

"You affect ignorance, surely."—"In what way, monseigneur?"

"You are a friend of De Guiche, who is one of the friends of the prince."

"That may be so, monseigneur; but the matter having no interest whatever for me, I never questioned De Guiche on the subject; and De Guiche on his part, never having been questioned, has not communicated any particulars to me."—"But Manicamp?"

"It is true I saw Manicamp at Havre, and during the journey here, but I was very careful to be as little inquisitive towards him as I had been towards De Guiche; besides, is it likely that Manicamp should know anything of such matters, for he is a person of only secondary importance?"

"My dear vicomte, do you not know better than that?" said the prince. "Why, it is these persons of secondary importance who, on such occasions, have all the influence; and the truth is, that nearly everything has been done through Manicamp's presentations to De Guiche, and through De Guiche to Monsieur."

"I assure you, monseigneur, I was completely ignorant of that," said Raoul, "and what your highness does me the honour to impart is perfectly new to me."

"I will most readily believe you, although it seems incredible; besides, we shall not have long to wait. See, the flying squadron is advancing, a good Queen Catherine used to say. "Ah, ah! what pretty faces!"

A bevy of young girls at this moment entered the *salon*, conducted by Madame de Navailles, and to Manicamp's credit be it said, if indeed he had taken that part in their selection which the Prince de Condé had assigned him, it was a display calculated to dazzle those who, like the prince, could appreciate every character and style of beauty. A young fair-complexioned girl, from twenty to one-and-twenty years of age, and whose large blue eyes flashed, as she opened them, in the most dazzling manner, walked at the head of the band, and was the first presented.

"Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente," said Madame de Navailles to Monsieur, who, as he saluted his wife, repeated, "Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente."

"Ah, ah!" said the Prince de Condé to Raoul, "she seems tolerable enough."

"Yes," said Raoul, "but has a somewhat haughty style."

"Bah! we know these airs very well, vicomte; three months hence she will be tame enough. But look—that indeed is a pretty face!"

"Yes," said Raoul, "and one I am acquainted with."

"Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais," said Madame de Navailles. The name and Christian name were carefully repeated by Monsieur.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Raoul, fixing his bewildered gaze upon the entrance-doorway.

What's the matter?" inquired the prince; "was it Mademoiselle Aure Montalais who made you utter such a 'Great heavens?'"

"No, monseigneur, no," replied Raoul, pale and trembling.

"Well, then, if it be not Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais, it is that pretty blonde who follows her. What beautiful eyes! She is rather thin, but has fascinations without number."

"Mademoiselle de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière!" said Madame de Mairalles; and, as this name resounded through his whole being, a cloud seemed to rise from his breast to his eyes, so that he neither saw nor heard anything more; and the prince, finding him nothing more than a mere fool who which remained silent under his railleries, moved forward to inspect somewhat closer the beautiful girls whom his first glance had already particularised.

"Louise here! Louise a maid of honour to Madame!" murmured Raoul, and his eyes, which did not suffice to satisfy his reason, wandered from Louise to Montalais. The latter had already emancipated herself from her assumed timidity, which she only needed for the presentation and for her reverences.

Mademoiselle de Montalais, from the corner of the room to which she had retired, was looking with no slight confidence at the different persons present; and, having discovered Raoul, she amused herself with the profound astonishment which her own and her friend's presence there had caused the unhappy lover. Her merry and malicious look, which Raoul tried to avoid meeting, and yet which he sought inquiringly from time to time, placed Raoul on the rack. As for Louise, whether from natural timidity, or from any other reason for which Raoul could not account, she kept her eyes constantly cast down, and, intimidated, dazzled, and with impeded respiration, she withdrew herself as much as possible aside, unaffected even by the knocks which Montalais gave her with her elbow. The whole scene was a perfect enigma for Raoul, the key to which he could have given anything to obtain. But no one was there who could assist him—not even Malicorne, who, a little uneasy at finding himself in the presence of so many persons of good birth, and not a little discouraged by Montalais' bantering glances, had described a circle, and by degrees had succeeded in getting a few paces from the prince, behind the group of maids of honour, and nearly within reach of Mademoiselle Aure's voice, she being the planet around which he, her attendant satellite, seemed compelled to gravitate. As he recovered his self-possession, Raoul fancied he recognised voices on his right hand which were familiar to him, and he perceived De Wardes, De Guiche, and the Chevalier de Lorraine, conversing together. It is true they were talking in tones so low, that the sound of their words could hardly be heard in the vast apartment. To speak in that manner from any particular place without bending down, or turning round, or looking at the person with whom one might be engaged in conversation, is a talent which cannot be immediately acquired in perfection by new comers. A long study is needed for such conversations which, without a look, gesture, or movement of the head, seemed like the conversations of a group of statues. In fact, in the king's and the queen's grand assemblies, while their majesties were speaking, and while every one present seemed to be listening with the most profound silence, some of these noiseless conversations took place, in which adulation was not the prevailing feature. But Raoul was one among others exceedingly clever in this art, so much a matter of etiquette, that from the movement of the lips, he was often able to guess the sense of the words.

"Who is that Montalais?" inquired De Wardes, "and that La Vallière? What country-town have we had sent here?"

"Montalais?" said the chevalier,—"oh, I know her; she is a good sort of a girl, whom we shall find amusing enough. La Vallière is a charming girl, slightly lame."

"Ah! bah!" said De Wardes.

"Do not be absurd, De Wardes, there are some very characteristic and ingenious Latin axioms upon lame ladies."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said De Guiche, looking at Raoul with uneasiness, "be a little careful, I entreat you."

But the uneasiness of the count, in appearance at least, was not needed. Raoul had preserved the firmest and most indifferent countenance, although he had not lost a word that had passed. He seemed to keep an account of the insolence and licence of the two speakers in order to settle matters with them at the earliest opportunity.

De Wardes seemed to guess what was passing in his mind, and continued, "Who are these young ladies' lovers?"

"Montalais' lover?" said the chevalier.

"Yes, Montalais first."

"You, I, or De Guiche,—whoever likes, in fact."—"And the other?"

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière?"—"Yes."

"Take care, gentlemen," exclaimed De Guiche, anxious to put a stop to De Wardes' reply, "take care, Madame is listening to us."

Raoul thrust his hand up to the wrist into his *justaucorps* coat in great agitation. But the very malignity which he saw was excited against these poor girls made him take a serious resolution. "Poor Louise," he thought, "has come here only with an honourable object in view, and under honourable protection; and I must learn what that object is which she has in view, and who it is that protects her." And following Malicorne's manœuvre, he made his way towards the group of the maids of honour. The presentations soon terminated. The king, who had done nothing but look at and admire Madame, shortly afterwards left the reception-room, accompanied by the two queens. The Chevalier de Lorraine resumed his place beside Monsieur, and, as he accompanied him, insinuated a few drops of the poison which he had collected during the last hour, while looking at some of the faces in the court, and suspecting that some of their hearts might be happy. A few of the persons present followed the king as he quitted the apartment; but such of the courtiers as assumed an independence of character, and professed a gallantry of disposition, began to approach the ladies of the court. The prince paid his compliments to Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, Buckingham devoted himself to Madame Chalais and to Mademoiselle de Lafayette, whom Madame had already distinguished by her notice, and whom she held in high regard. As for the Comte de Guiche, who had abandoned Monsieur as soon as he could approach Madame alone, he conversed, with great animation with Madame de Valentinois, and with Mesdemoiselles de Créigny and de Châtillon.

Amid these varied political and amorous interests, Malicorne was anxious to gain Montalais' attention; but the latter preferred talking with Raoul, even if it were only to amuse herself with his numerous questions and his surprise. Raoul had gone direct to Mademoiselle de Vallière, and had saluted her with the profoundest respect, at which Louise blushed, and could not say a word. Montalais, however, hurried to his assistance.

"Well, monsieur le vicomte, here we are, you see."

"I do indeed see you," said Raoul, smiling, "and it is exactly because you are here, that I wish to ask for some explanation."

Malicorne approached the group with his most fascinating smile.

"Go away, Malicorne; really, you are exceedingly indiscreet." At this remark Malicorne bit his lips and retired a few steps, without making any reply. His smile, however, changed its expression, and from its former frankness, became mocking in its expression.

"You wished for an explanation, M. Raoul?" inquired Montalais.

"It is surely worth one, I think; Mademoiselle de la Vallière a maid of honour to Madame!"

"Why should not she be a maid of honour, as well as myself?" inquired Montalais.

"Pray accept my compliments, young ladies," said Raoul, who fancied he perceived they were not disposed to answer him in a direct manner.

"Your remark was not made in a very complimentary manner, vicomte."

"Mine?"—"Certainly; I appeal to Louise."

"M. de Bragelonne probably thinks the position is above my condition," said Louise, hesitatingly.

"Assuredly not," replied Raoul eagerly; "you know very well that such is not my feeling; were you called upon to occupy a queen's throne, I should not be surprised; how much greater reason, then, such a position is this? The only circumstance which amazes me, is, that I should have earned it to-day, and that only by mere accident."

"That is true," replied Montalais, with her usual giddiness, "you know nothing about it, and there is no reason why you should. M. de Bragelonne had written several letters to you, but your mother was the only person who remained behind at Blois, and it was necessary to prevent these letters falling into her hands. I intercepted them, and returned them to M. Raoul, so that he believed you were still at Blois, while you were here in Paris, and had no idea whatever, indeed, how high you had risen in rank."

"Did you not inform M. Raoul, as I begged you to do?"

"Why should I? to give him an opportunity of making some of his severe remarks and moral reflections, and to undo what we had had so much trouble in getting done?"

"Certainly not."

"Am I so very severe, then?" said Raoul, inquiringly.

"Besides," said Montalais, "it is sufficient to say that it suited me. I was about setting off for Paris—you were away; Louise was weeping herself out; interpret that as you please; I begged a friend, a protector of mine, who had obtained the appointment for me, to solicit one for Louise; the appointment arrived. Louise left in order to get her costume prepared; as I had my own ready, I remained behind; I received your letters, and returned them to you, adding a few words, promising you a surprise. Your surprise is before you, monsieur, and seems to be a fair one enough; you have nothing more to ask. Come, M. Malicorne, it is now time to leave these young people together: they have many things to talk about; give me your hand; I trust that you appreciate the honour which is conferred upon you, M. Malicorne."

"Forgive me," said Raoul, arresting the giddy girl, and giving to his voice an intonation the gravity of which contrasted with that of Montalais; "forgive me, but may I inquire the name of the protector you speak of; if protection be extended towards you, Mademoiselle Montalais, and

for which, indeed, so many reasons exist," added Raoul, bowing, "I do not see that the same reasons exist why Mademoiselle de la Vallière should be similarly protected."

"But, M. Raoul," said Louise, innocently, "there is no difference in the matter, and I do not see why I should not tell it you myself; it was M. Malicorne who obtained it for me."

Raoul remained for a moment almost stupefied, asking himself if they were trifling with him; he then turned round to interrogate Malicorne, but he had been hurried away by Montalais, and was already at some distance from them. Mademoiselle de la Vallière attempted to follow her friend, but Raoul, with gentle authority, detained her.

"Louise, one word only, I beg."

"But, M. Raoul," said Louise, blushing, "we are alone. Every one has left. They will become anxious, and will be looking for us."

"Fear nothing," said the young man, smiling, "we are neither of sufficient importance for our absence to be remarked."

"But I have my duty to perform, M. Raoul."

"Do not be alarmed, I am acquainted with the usages of the court; you will not be on duty until to-morrow, a few minutes are at your disposal, which will enable you to give me the information I am about to have the honour to ask you."

"How serious you are, M. Raoul!" said Louise.

"Because the circumstance is a serious one. Are you listening?"

"I am listening; I would only repeat, monsieur, that we are quite alone."

"You are right," said Raoul, and, offering her his hand, he led the young girl into the gallery adjoining the reception-room, the windows of which looked out upon the court-yard. Every one hurried towards the middle window, which had a balcony outside, from which all the details of the slow and formal preparations for departure could be seen. Raoul opened one of the side windows, and then, being alone with Louise, said to her: "You know, Louise, that from my childhood I have regarded you as my sister, as one who has been the confidant of all my troubles, to whom I have entrusted all my hopes."

"Yes, M. Raoul," she answered, softly; "yes, M. Raoul, I know that."

"You used, on your side, to show the same friendship towards me, and had the same confidence in me; why have you not, on this occasion, been my friend, and why have you shown a suspicion of me?"

Mademoiselle de la Vallière did not answer. "I had thought you loved me," said Raoul, whose voice became more and more agitated; "I had thought that you had consented to all the plans which we had, together laid down for our own happiness, at the time when we wandered up and down the large walks of Cour-Cheverny, and under the avenue of poplar trees leading to Blois. You do not answer me, Louise."

"Is it possible," he inquired, breathing with difficulty, "that you no longer love me?"

"I did not say so," replied Louise, softly.

"Oh! tell me the truth, I implore you; all my hopes in life are centred in you, I chose you for your gentle and simple tastes. Do not suffer yourself to be dazzled, Louise, now that you are in the midst of a court where all that is pure becomes corrupt—where all that is young soon grows old. Louise, close your ears, so as not to hear what may be said; shut your eyes, so as not to see the examples before you; shut your lips, that you may not inhale the corrupting influences about you. Without falsehood or subterfuge, Louise, am I to believe what Mademoiselle de Montalais

tated? Louise, did you come to Paris because I was no longer at Blois?"

La Vallière blushed and concealed her face in her hands.

"Yes, it was so, then," exclaimed Raoul, delightedly, "that was, then, your reason for coming here. I love you as I never yet loved you. Thanks, Louise, for this devotedness; but measures must be taken to place you beyond all insult, to secure you from every harm; Louise, a maid of honour, in the court of a young princess in these times of freedom of manners and inconstant affections—a maid of honour is placed as an object of attack without having any means of defence afforded her; this state of things cannot continue; you must be married in order to be respected."

"Married?"

"Yes, there is my hand, Louise, will you place your hand within it?"

"But your father?"—"My father leaves me perfectly free."

"Yet——"

"I understand your scruples, Louise, I will consult my father."

"Reflect, M. Raoul, wait."

"Wait! it is impossible; reflect, Louise, when you are concerned, it would be insulting to you; give me your hand, dear Louise, I am my own master; my father will consent, I know; give me your hand, do not keep me waiting thus; one word in answer, one word only; if not, I shall begin to think that, in order to change you for ever, nothing more was needed than a single step in the palace, a single breath of favour, a smile from the queen, a single look from the king."

Raoul had no sooner pronounced this latter word, than La Vallière became as pale as death, no doubt from her fear at seeing the young man excite himself. With a movement as rapid as thought, she placed both her hands in those of Raoul, and then fled without adding a syllable; disappeared without casting a look behind her. Raoul felt his whole frame tremble at the contact of her hand; he received the compact as a solemn compact wrung by affection from her childlike timidity.

## CHAPTER XC.

### THE CONSENT OF ATHOS.

RAOUL had quitted the Palais Royal full of ideas which admitted of no delay in their execution. He mounted his horse in the courtyard, and followed the road to Blois, while the marriage festivities of Monsieur and the princess of England were being celebrated with great animation by the courtiers, but to the great despair of De Guiche and Buckingham. Raoul lost no time on the road, and in sixteen hours he arrived at Blois. As he travelled along, he arranged his arguments in the best manner. Fever also is an argument that cannot be answered, and Raoul had an attack of fever. Athos was in his study, making some additions to his memoirs, when Raoul entered, accompanied by Grimaud. Keen-sighted and penetrating, a mere glance at his son told him that something extraordinary had befallen him.

"You seem to have come on some matter of great importance," said he to Raoul, after he had embraced him, and pointing to a seat.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the young man; "and I entreat you to give me that same kind attention which has never yet failed me."

"Speak, Raoul."

"I present the case to you, monsieur, free from all preface, for that would be unworthy of you. Mademoiselle de la Vallière is in Paris as one of Madame's maids of honour. I have pondered deeply on the matter ; I love Mademoiselle de la Vallière above everything ; and it is not proper to leave her in a position where her reputation, her virtue even, may be exposed. It is my wish, therefore, to marry her, monsieur, and I have come to solicit your consent to my marriage."

While this communication was being made to him, Athos had maintained the profoundest silence and reserve. Raoul, who had begun his address with an assumption of self-possession, finished it by allowing a manifest emotion to escape him at every word. Athos fixed upon Bragelonne a searching look, overshadowed indeed by a slight sadness.

"You have reflected well upon it?" he inquired.—"Yes, monsieur."

"I believe you have already been made acquainted with my views respecting this alliance?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Raoul, in a low tone of voice ; "but you added, that if I persisted——"——"You do insist, then?"

Bragelonne stammered out an almost unintelligible assent.

"Your passion," continued Athos, tranquilly, "must, indeed, be very great, since, notwithstanding my dislike to this union, you persist in wishing it."

Raoul passed his trembling hand across his forehead to remove the perspiration which had collected there. Athos looked at him, and his heart was touched by pity for him. He then rose, and said :

"It is no matter ; my own personal feelings are indifferent, since yours are concerned ; you need my assistance, I am ready to give it ; tell me what you want."

"Your kind indulgence, first of all, monsieur," said Raoul, taking hold of his hand.

"You have mistaken my feelings, Raoul ; I have more than mere indulgence for you in my heart."

Raoul kissed as devotedly as a lover could have done the hand he held in his own.

"Come, come," said Athos, "I am quite ready ; what do you wish me to sign?"

"Nothing whatever, monsieur ; only it would be very kind if you would take the trouble to write to the king, to whom I belong, and solicit his majesty's permission for me to marry Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

"Well thought, Raoul ; after, or rather before myself, you have a master to consult, that master being the king ; it is loyal in you to submit your self voluntarily to this double proof ; I will grant your request without delay, Raoul."

The count approached the window, and, leaning out, called to Grimaud who showed his head from an arbour covered with jasmine, which he was occupied in trimming.

"My horses, Grimaud," continued the count.

"Why this order, monsieur?" inquired Raoul.

"We shall set off in a few hours."——"Whither?"

"For Paris."——"Paris, monsieur?"

"Is not the king at Paris?"——"Certainly."

"Well, ought we not to go there !"

"Yet, monsieur," said Raoul, almost alarmed by this kind condescension, "I do not ask you to put yourself to such inconvenience, and letter merely——"

"You mistake my position, Raoul ; it is not respectful that a simple gentleman such as I am, should write to his sovereign. I wish to speak, and I ought to speak, to the king, and I will do so. We will go together, Raoul."

"You overpower me with your kindness, monsieur."

"How do you think his majesty is affected?"

"Towards me, monsieur?"—"Yes."

"Excellently well disposed."

"You know that to be so?" continued the count.

an. "The king has himself told me so."—"On what occasion?"

to. "Upon the recommendation of M. d'Artagnan, I believe, and on account of an affair in the Place de Grève, when I had the honour to draw my sword in the king's service. I have reason to believe that, vanity apart, I stand well with his majesty."

"So much the better."

"But I entreat you, monsieur," pursued Raoul, "not to maintain towards me your present grave and serious manner. Do not make me bitterly regret having listened to a feeling stronger than anything else."

"That is the second time you have said so, Raoul ; it was quite unnecessary ; you require my formal consent, and you have it. We need talk no more on the subject, therefore. Come and see my new plantations, Raoul."

The young man knew very well, that, after the expression of his father's wish, no opportunity of discussion was left him. He bowed his head, and followed his father into the garden. Athos slowly pointed out to him the grafts, the cuttings, and the avenues he was planting. This perfect repose of manner disconcerted Raoul extremely ; the affection with which his own heart was filled seemed so great that the whole world could hardly contain it. How, then, could his father's heart remain void, and closed to its influence? Bragelonne, thereupon, collecting all his courage, suddenly exclaimed :

"It is impossible, monsieur, you can have any reason to reject Mademoiselle de la Vallière ; in Heaven's name, she is so good, so gentle and pure, that your mind, so perfect in its penetration, ought to appreciate her accordingly. Does any secret repugnance, or an hereditary dislike, exist between you and her family?"

"Look, Raoul, at that beautiful lily of the valley," said Athos ; "observe how the shade and the damp situation suit it, particularly the shadow which that sycamore-tree casts over it, so that the warmth, and not the blazing heat of the sun filters through its branches."

Raoul stopped, bit his lips, and then, with the blood mantling in his face, he said, courageously,— "One word of explanation, I beg, monsieur. You cannot forget that your son is a man."

"In that case," replied Athos, drawing himself up with sternness, "prove to me that you are a man, for you do not show yourself to be a son. I begged you to wait the opportunity of forming an illustrious alliance. I should have obtained a wife for you from the first ranks of the rich nobility. I wish you to be distinguished by the splendour which glory and fortune confer, for nobility of descent you have already."

"Monsieur," exclaimed Raoul, carried away by a first impulse, "I was reproached the other day for not knowing who my mother was."

Athos turned pale ; then knitting his brows like the greatest of the heathen deities :—"I am waiting to learn the reply you made," he demanded, in an imperious manner.

"Forgive me ! oh, forgive me !" murmured the young man, sinking at once from the lofty tone he had assumed.

"What was your reply, monsieur ?" inquired the count, stamping his foot upon the ground.

"Monsieur, my sword was in my hand immediately, my adversary placed himself on guard, I struck his sword over the palisade, and threw him after it."

"Why did you suffer him to live ?"

"The king has prohibited duelling, and, at that moment, I was an ambassador of the king."

"Very well," said Athos, "but the greater reason I should see in his majesty."

"What do you intend to ask him ?"

"Authority to draw my sword against the man who has inflicted this injury upon me."

"If I did not act as I ought to have done, I beg you to forgive me."

"Did I reproach you, Raoul ?"

"Still, the permission you are going to ask from the king ?"

"I will implore his majesty to sign your marriage-contract, but on one condition."

"Are conditions necessary with me, monsieur ? Command, and you shall be obeyed."

"On one condition, I repeat," continued Athos ; "that you tell me the name of the man who spoke of your mother in that way."

"What need is there that you should know his name ; the offence was directed against myself, and the permission once obtained from his majesty, to revenge it is my affair."

"Tell me his name, monsieur ?"

"I will not allow you to expose yourself."

"Do you take me for a Don Diego ! His name, I say ?"

"You insist upon it ?"—"I demand it."

"The Vicomte de Wardes."

"Very well," said Athos, tranquilly, "I know him. But our horses are ready, I see ; and, instead of delaying our departure for a couple of hours, we will set off at once. Come monsieur."

## CHAPTER XCI.

### MONSIEUR BECOMES JEALOUS OF THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

WHILE the Comte de la Fère was proceeding on his way to Paris, accompanied by Raoul, the Palais Royal was the theatre wherein a scene of what Molière would have called excellent comedy, was being performed. Four days had elapsed since his marriage, and Monsieur, having breakfasted very hurriedly, passed into his antechamber, frowning and out of temper. The repast had not been over-agreeable. Madame had had breakfast served in her own apartment, and Monsieur had breakfasted almost alone : the Chevalier de Lorraine and Manicamp were the only persons present at the meal, which had lasted three-quarters of an hour without a single syllable having been uttered. Manicamp, who was less intimate with his royal highness than the Chevalier de Lorraine, vainly endeavoured to detect, from the expression of the prince's face, what had made him so ill-humoured. The Chevalier de Lorraine, who had no occasion to speculate about anything, inasmuch as he knew all, ate his breakfast with that ex-

traordinary appetite which the troubles of one's friends afford us, and enjoyed at the same time both the ill-humour of Monsieur and the vexation of Manicamp. He seemed delighted, while he went on eating, to detain the prince, who was very impatient to move, still at table. Monsieur at times repented the ascendancy which he had permitted the Chevalier de Lorraine to acquire over him, and which exempted the latter from any observance of etiquette towards him. Monsieur was now in one of those moods, but he dreaded as much as he liked the chevalier, and contented himself by indulging his anger without betraying it. Every now and then Monsieur raised his eyes to the ceiling, then lowered them towards the slices of *pâté* which the chevalier was attacking ; and finally, not venturing to betray his anger, he gesticulated in a manner which Harlequin might have envied. At last, however, Monsieur could control himself no longer, and at the dessert, rising from the table in excessive wrath, as we have related, he left the Chevalier de Lorraine to finish his breakfast as he pleased. Seeing Monsieur rise from the table, Manicamp, napkin in hand, rose also. Monsieur ran, rather than walked, towards the antechamber, where, noticing an usher in attendance, he gave him some directions in a low tone of voice. Then, turning back again, but avoiding passing through the breakfast apartment, he crossed several rooms, with the intention of seeking the queen-mother in her oratory, where she usually remained.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning. Anne of Austria was engaged in writing as monsieur entered. The queen-mother was extremely attached to her son, for he was handsome in person and amiable in disposition. He was, in fact, more affectionate, and it might be more effeminate than the king. He pleased his mother by those trifling sympathizing attentions which all women are glad to receive. Anne of Austria, who would have been rejoiced to have had a daughter, almost found in this, her favourite son, the attentions, solicitude, and playful manners of a child of twelve years of age. All the time he passed with his mother he employed in admiring her arms, in giving his opinion upon her cosmetics, and receipts for compounding essences, in which she was very particular ; and then, too, he kissed her hands and eyes in the most endearing and child-like manner, and had always some sweetmeats to offer her, or some new style of dress to recommend. Anne of Austria loved the king, or rather the regal power in her eldest son ; Louis XIV. represented legitimacy by divine right. With the king, her character was that of the queen-mother, with Philip she was simply the mother. The latter knew that, of all places of refuge, a mother's heart is the most compassionate and the surest. When quite a child, he always fled there for refuge when he and his brother quarrelled ; often, after having struck him, which constituted the crime of high treason on his part, after certain engagements with hands and nails, in which the king and his rebellious subject indulged in their night-dresses respecting the right to a disputed bed, having their servant Laporte as umpire,—Philip, the conqueror, but terrified at his victory, used to flee to his mother to obtain reinforcements from her, or at least the assurance of a forgiveness, which Louis XIV. granted with difficulty, and after an interval. Anne, from this habit of peaceful intervention, had succeeded in arranging the different disputes of both her sons, and in sharing, at the same time, all their secrets. The king, somewhat jealous of that maternal solicitude which was bestowed particularly upon his brother, felt disposed to show towards Anne of Austria more submission and attachment than his character really possessed. Anne of Austria had adopted this line of con-

duct especially towards the young queen. In this manner she ruled with almost despotic sway over the royal household, and she was already preparing all her batteries to rule with the same absolute authority over the household of her second son. Anne experienced almost a feeling of pride whenever she saw any one enter her apartments with woe-begone looks, pale cheeks, or red eyes, gathering from appearances that assistance was required either by the weakest or by the most rebellious. She was writing, we have said, when Monsieur entered her oratory, not with red eyes or pale cheeks, but restless, out of temper, and annoyed. With an absent air he kissed his mother's arms, and sat himself down before receiving her permission to do so. Considering the strict rules of etiquette established at the court of Anne of Austria, this forgetfulness of customary respect was a sign of preoccupation, especially on Philip's part, who, of his own accord, observed a respect towards her of a somewhat exaggerated character. If, therefore, he so notoriously failed with regard to such principles of respect, there must surely be a serious cause for it. "What is the matter, Philip?" inquired Anne of Austria, turning towards her son.

"A great many things," murmured the prince, in a doleful tone of voice.

"You look like a man who has a great deal to do," said the queen, laying down her pen. Philip frowned, but did not reply. "Among the various subjects which occupy your mind," said Anne of Austria. "there must surely be one which occupies it more than others."

"One indeed has occupied me more than any other."

"Well, what is it? I am listening."

Philip opened his mouth as if to express all the troubles his mind was filled with, and which he seemed to be waiting only for an opportunity to declare what they were. But he suddenly became silent, and a sigh alone expressed all that his heart was filled with. "Come, Philip, show a little firmness," said the queen-mother. "When one has to complain of anything, it is generally an individual who is the cause of it. Am I not right?"

"I do not say no, madame."

"Whom do you wish to speak about? Come, take courage."

"In fact, madame, what I might possibly have to say must be kept a perfect secret; for when a lady is in the case——"

"Ah! you're speaking of Madame, then?" inquired the queen-mother, with a feeling of the liveliest curiosity. —— "Yes."

"Well, then, if you wish to speak of Madame, do not hesitate to do so. I am your mother, and she is no more than a stranger to me. Yet, as she is my daughter-in-law, be assured I shall be interested, even were it for your own sake alone, in hearing all you may have to say about her."

"Pray tell me, madame, in your turn, whether you have not remarked something?"

"Something! Philip? Your words almost frighten me from their want of meaning. What do you mean by something?"

"Madame is pretty, certainly." —— "No doubt of it."

"Yet not altogether beautiful."

"No, but as she grows older she will probably become very strikingly beautiful. You must have remarked the change which a few years have already made in her. Her beauty will improve more and more; she is now only sixteen years of age. At fifteen I was, myself, very thin; but even as she is at present, Madame is very pretty."

"And consequently others may have remarked it."

"Undoubtedly, for a woman of ordinary rank is remarked, and with still greater reason a princess."

"She has been well brought up, I suppose?"

"Madame Henrietta, her mother, is a woman somewhat cold in her manner, slightly pretentious, but full of noble thoughts. The princess's education may have been neglected, but her principles I believe to be good. Such, at least, was the opinion I formed of her when she resided in France; but she afterwards returned to England, and I am ignorant of what may have occurred there."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that there are some heads naturally giddy, which are easily turned by prosperity."

"That is the very word, madame. I think the princess rather giddy."

"We must not exaggerate, Philip; she is clever and witty, and has a certain amount of coquetry very natural in a young woman; but this defect is, in persons of high rank and position, a great advantage at a court. A princess, who is tinged with coquetry, usually forms a brilliant court around her; her smile stimulates luxury, and arouses wit, and even courage; the nobles, too, fight better for a prince whose wife is beautiful."

"Thank you extremely, madame," said Philip, with some temper; "you really have drawn some very alarming pictures for me."

"In what respect?" asked the queen, with pretended simplicity.

"You know, madame," said Philip, dolefully, "whether I had or had not a very great dislike to getting married."

"Now, indeed, you alarm me; you have some serious cause of complaint against Madame?"

"I do not precisely say it is serious."

"In that case, then, throw aside your present mournful looks. If you show yourself to others in your present state, people will take you for a very unhappy husband."

"The fact is," replied Philip, "I am not altogether satisfied as a husband, and I shall be glad that others should know it."

"For shame, Philip!"

"Well, then, madame, I will tell you frankly that I do not understand the life I am required to lead."

"Explain yourself."

"My wife does not seem to belong to me; she is always leaving me for some reason or another. In the mornings there are visits, correspondences, and toilettes; in the evenings, balls and concerts."

"You are jealous, Philip."

"I! Heaven forbid! Let others act the part of a jealous husband—not I; but I am annoyed."

"All those things you reproach your wife with are perfectly innocent, and so long as you have nothing of greater importance—yet, listen: without being very blamable, a woman can excite a good deal of uneasiness; certain visitors may be received, certain preferences shown, which expose young women to remark, and which are enough to drive out of their senses even those husbands who are least disposed to be jealous."

"Ah! now we are coming to the real point at last, and not without some difficulty, too. You speak of frequent visits, and certain preferences—very good; for the last hour we have been beating about the bush, and at last you have broached the true question."

"This is more serious than I thought. Is it possible, then, that Madame can have given you grounds for these complaints against her?"

"Precisely so."

"What! your wife, married only four days ago, prefer some other person

to yourself? Take care, Philip, you exaggerate your grievances ; in wishing to prove everything, you prove nothing."

The prince, bewildered by his mother's serious manner, wished to reply, but he could only stammer out some unintelligible words.

"You draw back, then?" said Anne of Austria. "I prefer that, as it is an acknowledgment of your mistake."

"No!" exclaimed Philip, "I do not draw back, and I will prove all I asserted. I spoke of preference and of visits, did I not? Well, listen to them."

Anne of Austria prepared herself to listen with that love of gossip which the best woman living and the best mother, were she a queen even, always finds in being mixed up with the petty squabbles of a household.

"Well," said Philip, "tell me one thing."—"What is that?"

"Why does my wife retain an English court about her?" said Philip, as he crossed his arms and looked his mother steadily in the face, as if he were convinced that she could not answer the question.

"For a very simple reason," returned Anne of Austria—"because the English are her countrymen, because they have expended large sums in order to accompany her to France, and because it would be hardly polite—not good policy, certainly—to dismiss abruptly those members of the English nobility who have not shrunk from any devotion or from any sacrifice."

"A wonderful sacrifice, indeed," returned Philip, "to desert a wretched country to come to a beautiful one, where a greater effect can be produced for one crown than can be procured elsewhere for four! Extraordinary devotion, really, to travel a hundred leagues in company with a woman one is in love with!"

"In love, Philip! Think what you are saying. Who is in love with Madame?"

"The handsome Duke of Buckingham. Perhaps you will defend him as well?"

Anne of Austria blushed and smiled at the same time. The name of the Duke of Buckingham recalled certain recollections to her of a tender and melancholy nature. "The Duke of Buckingham!" she murmured.

"Yes; one of those feather-bed soldiers——"

"The Bückinghams are loyal and brave," said Anne of Austria, courteously.

"This is too bad! my own mother takes the part of my wife's lover against me!" exclaimed Philip, incensed to such an extent that his weak organisation was affected almost to tears.

"Philip, my son," exclaimed Anne of Austria, "such an expression is unworthy of you! Your wife has no lover; and, had she one, it would not be the Duke of Buckingham. The members of that family, I repeat, are loyal and discreet, and the rights of hospitality are sure to be respected by them."

"The Duke of Buckingham is an Englishman, madame," said Philip, "and may I ask if the English so very religiously respect what belongs to princes of France?"

Anne blushed a second time, and turned aside under the pretext of taking her pen from her desk again, but really to conceal her blushes from her son. "Really, Philip," she said, "you seem to discover expressions for the purpose of embarrassing me, and your anger blinds you while it alarms me. Reflect a little."

"There is no need of reflection, madame, for I see with my own eyes."

"Well, and what do you see?"

"That Buckingham never quits my wife. He presumes to make presents to her, and she ventures to accept them. Yesterday she was talking about *sachets à la violette*; well, our French perfumers, you know very well, madame, for you have over and over again asked for it without success—our French perfumers, I say, have never been able to procure this scent. The duke, however, wore about him a *sachet à la violette*, and I am sure that the one my wife has came from him."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Anne of Austria, "you build your pyramids upon needle-points; be careful. What harm, I ask you, can there be in a man giving to his countrywoman a receipt for a new essence? These strange ideas, I protest, painfully recall your father to me—he who so frequently and so unjustly made me suffer."

"The Duke of Buckingham's father was probably more reserved and more respectful than his son," said Philip, thoughtlessly, not perceiving how deeply he had wounded his mother's feelings. The queen turned pale, and pressed her clenched hand upon her bosom; but, recovering herself immediately, she said, "You came here with some intention or another, I suppose?"

"Certainly,"—"What was it?"

"I came, madame, intending to complain energetically, and to inform you that I will not submit to anything from the Duke of Buckingham."

"What do you intend to do, then?"

"I shall complain to the king."

"And what do you expect the king to reply?"

"Very well, then," said Monsieur, with an expression of stern determination on his countenance, which offered a singular contrast to its usual gentleness. "Very well. I will right myself!"

"What do you call righting yourself?" inquired Anne of Austria, in alarm.

"I will have the Duke of Buckingham quit the princess, I will have him quit France, and I will see that my wishes are intimated to him."

"You will intimate nothing of the kind, Philip," said the queen, "for if you act in that manner, and violate hospitality to that extent, I will invoke the severity of the king against you."

"Do you threaten me, madame?" exclaimed Philip, in tears; "do you threaten me in the midst of my complaints?"

"I do not threaten you; I do but place an obstacle in the path of your hasty anger. I maintain, that, to adopt towards the Duke of Buckingham, or any other Englishman, any rigorous measure—to take even a discourteous step towards him, would be to hurry France and England into the saddest variances. Can it be possible that a prince of the blood, the brother of the king of France, does not know how to hide an injury, even did it exist in reality, where political necessity requires it?" Philip made a movement. "Besides," continued the queen, "the injury is neither true nor possible, and it is merely a matter of silly jealousy."

"Madame, I know what I know."

"Whatever you may know, I can only advise you to be patient."

"I am not patient by disposition, madame."

The queen rose, full of severity, and with an icy ceremonious manner. "Explain what you really require, Monsieur," she said.

"I do not require anything, madame; I simply express what I desire. If the Duke of Buckingham does not, of his own accord, discontinue his visits to my apartments, I shall forbid him an entrance."

"That is a point you will refer to the king," said Anne of Austria, her heart swelling as she spoke, and her voice trembling with emotion.

"But, madame," exclaimed Philip, striking his hands together, "act as my mother and not as the queen, since I speak to you as a son; it is simply a matter of a few minutes' conversation between the duke and myself."

"It is that conversation that I forbid," said the queen, resuming her authority, "because it is unworthy of you."

"Be it so: I shall not appear in the matter, but I shall intimate my will to Madame."

"Oh!" said the queen-mother, with a melancholy arising from reflection, "never tyrannize over a wife—never behave too haughtily or imperiously towards yours. A woman, unwillingly convinced, is unconvinced."

"What is to be done, then?—I will consult my friends about it."

"Yes, your hypocritical advisers, the Chevalier de Lorraine—your De Wardes. Entrust the conduct of this affair to me. You wish the Duke of Buckingham to leave, do you not?"

"As soon as possible, madame."

"Send the duke to me, then; smile upon your wife; behave to her, to the king, to every one, as usual. But follow no advice but mine. Alas! I too well know what a household is which is troubled by advisers."

"You shall be obeyed, madame."

And you will be satisfied at the result. Send the duke to me."

That will not be difficult."

Where do you suppose him to be?"

At my wife's door, whose *levée* he is probably awaiting."

Very well," said Anne of Austria, calmly. "Be good enough to tell the duke that I beg him to come and see me."

Philip kissed his mother's hand, and set off to find the Duke of Buckingham.

## CHAPTER XCII.

### FOR EVER!

THE Duke of Buckingham, obedient to the queen-mother's invitation, presented himself in her apartments half an hour after the departure of the Duc d'Orléans. When his name was announced by the gentleman-usher in attendance, the queen, who was sitting with her elbow resting on a table and her head buried in her hands, rose, and smilingly received the graceful and respectful salutation which the duke addressed to her. Anne of Austria was still beautiful. It is well known that at her then somewhat advanced age, her long auburn hair, perfectly formed hands, and bright ruby lips, were still the admiration of all who saw her. On the present occasion, abandoned entirely to a remembrance which evoked all the passion in her heart, she was as beautiful as in the days of her youth, when her palace was open to the visits of the Duke of Buckingham's father, then a young and impassioned man, as well as an unfortunate one, who lived but for her alone, and who died with her name upon his lips. Anne of Austria fixed upon Buckingham a look so tender in its expression, that it denoted not alone the indulgence of maternal affection, but a gentleness of expression like the coquetry of a woman who loves.

"Your majesty," said Buckingham, respectfully, "desired to speak to me."

"Yes, duke," said the queen, in English; "will you be good enough to sit down?"

The favour which Anne of Austria thus extended to the young man

and the welcome sound of the language of a country from which the duke had been estranged since his stay in France, deeply affected him. He immediately conjectured that the queen had a request to make of him. After having abandoned the few first moments to the irrepressible emotion she experienced, the queen resumed the smiling air with which she had received him. "What do you think of France?" she said, in French.

"It is a lovely country, madame," replied the duke.

"Had you ever seen it before?"—"Once only, madame."

"But, like all true Englishmen, you prefer England?"

"I prefer my own native land to France," replied the duke; "but if your majesty were to ask me which of the two cities, London or Paris, I should prefer as a residence, I should reply Paris."

Anne of Austria observed the ardent manner with which these words had been pronounced. "I am told, my lord, you have rich possessions in your own country, and that you live in a splendid and time-honoured palace."

"It was my father's residence," replied Buckingham, casting down his eyes.

"Those are indeed great advantages and *souvenirs*," replied the queen, alluding, in spite of herself, to recollections from which it is impossible voluntarily to detach one's self.

"In fact," said the duke, yielding to the melancholy influence of this opening conversation, "sensitive persons live as much in the past or the future as in the present."

"That is very true," said the queen, in a low tone of voice. "It follows, then, my lord," she added, "that you, who are a man of feeling, will soon quit France in order to shut yourself up with your wealth and your relics of the past."

Buckingham raised his head and said, "I think not, madame."

"What do you mean?"

"On the contrary, I think of leaving England in order to take up my residence in France."

It was now Anne of Austria's turn to exhibit surprise. "Why?" she said. "Are you not in favour with the new king?"

"Perfectly so, madame, for his majesty's kindness to me is unbounded."

"It cannot," said the queen, "be because your fortune has diminished, for it is said to be enormous."

"My fortune, madame, has never been more thriving."

"There is some secret cause, then?"

"No, madame," said Buckingham, eagerly, "there is nothing secret in my reason for this determination. I like the residence in France; I like a court so distinguished by its refinement and courtesy; I like the amusements, somewhat serious in their nature, which are not the amusements of my own country, and which are met with in France."

Anne of Austria smiled shrewdly. "Amusements of a serious nature?" she said. "Has your grace well reflected on their seriousness?" The duke hesitated. "There is no amusement so serious," continued the queen, "as should prevent a man of your rank——"

"Your majesty seems to insist greatly upon that point," interrupted the duke.—"Do you think so, my lord?"

"If your majesty will forgive me for saying so, it is the second time you have vaunted the attractions of England at the expense of the delight which all experience who live in France."

Anne of Austria approached the young man, and placing her beautiful hand upon his shoulder, which trembled at the touch, said, "Believe me, monsieur, nothing can equal a residence in one's own native country. I have very frequently had occasion to regret Spain. I have lived long, my lord, very long for a woman, and I confess to you, that not a year has passed that I have not regretted Spain."

"Not one year, madame?" said the young duke, coldly. "Not one of those years when you reigned queen of Beauty—as you still are, indeed?"

"A truce to flattery, duke, for I am old enough to be your mother." She emphasised these latter words in a manner, and with a gentleness, which penetrated Buckingham's heart. "Yes," she said, "I am old enough to be your mother; and for this reason, I will give you a word of advice."

"That advice being that I should return to London?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my lord."

The duke clasped his hands with a terrified gesture, which could not fail of its effect upon the queen, already disposed to softer feelings by the tenderness of her own recollections. "It must be so," added the queen.

"What!" he again exclaimed, "am I seriously told that I *must* leave—that I must exile myself,—that I am to flee at once?"

"Exile yourself, did you say? One would fancy France was your native country."

"Madame, the country of those who love is the country of those whom they love."

"Not another word, my lord; you forget whom you are addressing."

Buckingham threw himself on his knees. "Madame, you are the source of intelligence, of goodness, and of compassion; you are the first person in this kingdom, not only by your rank, but the first person in the world on account of your angelic attributes. I have said nothing, madame. Have I, indeed, said anything for which you could answer me by such a cruel remark? Can I have betrayed myself?"

"You have betrayed yourself," said the queen, in a low tone of voice.

"I have said nothing,—I know nothing."

"You forget you have spoken and thought in the presence of a woman and besides——"

"Besides," said the duke, "no one knows you are listening to me."

"On the contrary, it is known; you have all the defects and all the qualities of youth."

"I have been betrayed or denounced, then?"—"By whom?"

"By those who, at Havre, had, with infernal perspicacity, read my heart like an open book."

"I do not know whom you mean."

"M. de Bragelonne, for instance."

"I know the name without being acquainted with the person to whom it belongs. M. de Bragelonne has said nothing."

"Whom can it be, then? If any one, madame, had had the boldness to notice in me that which I do not myself wish to behold——"

"What would you do, duke?"

"There are secrets which kill those who discover them."

"He, then, who has discovered your secret, madman that you are, still lives; and, what is more, you will not slay him, for he is armed on all sides,—he is a husband, a jealous man,—he is the second gentleman in France,—he is my son, the Duc d'Orléans."

The duke turned pale as death. "You are very cruel, madame," he said.

"You see, Buckingham," said Anne of Austria, sadly, "how you pa-

from one extreme to another, and fight with shadows, when it would seem easy to remain at peace with yourself."

"If we fight, madame, we die on the field of battle," replied the young man gently, abandoning himself to the most gloomy depression.

Anne ran towards him and took him by the hand. "Villiers," she said, English, with a vehemence of tone which nothing could resist, "what is you ask? Do you ask a mother to sacrifice her son;—a queen to consent to the dishonour of her house? Child that you are, do not think of

What! in order to spare your tears am I to commit these two crimes? Villiers! you speak of the dead; the dead, at least, were full of respect and submission; they resigned themselves to an order of exile; they carried their despair away with them in their hearts, like a priceless possession, because the despair was caused by the woman they loved, and because death, thus deceptive, was like a gift or a favour conferred upon them."

Buckingham rose, his features distorted, and his hands pressed against his heart. "You are right, madame;" he said, "but those of whom you speak had received their order of exile from the lips of the one whom they loved; they were not driven away; they were entreated to leave, and were not laughed at."

"No," murmured Anne of Austria, "they were not forgotten. But who says you are driven away, or that you are exiled? Who says that your devotion will not be remembered? I do not speak on any one's behalf but my own, when I tell you to leave. Do me this kindness—grant me your favour; let me, for this, also, be indebted to one of your name."

"It is for your sake, then, madame?"—"For mine alone."

"No one whom I shall leave behind me will venture to mock,—no prince, even, who shall say, 'I required it.'"

"Listen to me, duke," and hereupon the dignified features of the queen assumed a solemn expression. "I swear to you that no one commands this matter but myself. I swear to you that, not only shall no one either sigh or boast in any way, but no one even shall fail in the respect due to your rank. Rely upon me, duke, as I rely upon you."

"You do not explain yourself, madame; my heart is full of bitterness, and I am in utter despair; no consolation however gentle and affectionate can afford me relief."

"Do you remember your mother, duke?" replied the queen, with a winning smile.

"Very slightly, madame; yet I remember how she used to cover me with her caresses and her tears whenever I wept."

"Villiers," murmured the queen, passing her arm round the young man's neck, "look upon me as your mother, and believe that no one shall ever make my son weep."

"I thank you, madame," said the young man, affected and almost suffocated by his emotion; "I feel there is indeed still room in my heart for gentler and nobler sentiment than love."

The queen mother looked at him and pressed his hand. "Go," she said. "When must I leave? Command me."

"Any time that may suit you, my lord," resumed the queen; "you may choose your own day of departure. Instead, however, of setting off to-day, as you would doubtless wish to do, or to-morrow, as others may have expected, leave the day after to-morrow, in the evening; but announce to-day that it is your wish to leave."

"My wish?" murmured the young duke.—"Yes, duke."

"And shall I never return to France ;"

Anne of Austria reflected for a moment, seemingly absorbed in sad and serious thought. "It would be a consolation for me," she said, "if you were to return on the day when I shall be carried to my final resting-place at Saint-Denis, beside the king, my husband."

"Madame, you are goodness itself ; the tide of prosperity is setting in on you ; your cup brims over with happiness, and many long years are yet before you."

"In that case you will not come for some time, then," said the queen, endeavouring to smile.

"I shall not return," said Buckingham, "young as I am. Death does not reckon by years ; it is impartial ; some die young, others live on to old age."

"I will not allow any sorrowful ideas, duke. Let me comfort you : return in two years. I perceive from your face that the very ideas which sadden you so much now, will have disappeared before six months shall have passed, and will be all dead and forgotten in the period of absence I have assigned you."

"I think you judged me better a little while since, madame," replied the young man, "when you said that time is powerless against members of the family of Buckingham."

"Silence," said the queen, kissing the duke upon the forehead with an affection she could not restrain. "Go, go : spare me, and forget yourself no longer. I am the queen ; you are the subject of the king of England ; King Charles awaits your return. Adieu, Villiers,—farewell."

"For ever !" replied the young man, and he fled, endeavouring to master his emotion.

Anne leaned her head upon her hands, and then, looking at herself in the glass, murmured, "It has been truly said that a woman is always young, and that the age of twenty years always lies concealed in some secret corner of the heart."

## CHAPTER XCIII.

KING LOUIS XIV. DOES NOT THINK MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIERE EITHER RICH ENOUGH OR PRETTY ENOUGH FOR A GENTLEMAN OF THE RANK OF THE VICOMTE DE BRAGELONNE.

RAOUL and the Comte de la Fère reached Paris the evening of the same day on which Buckingham had had the conversation with the queen mother. The count had scarcely arrived, when, through Raoul, he solicited an audience of the king. His majesty had passed a portion of the morning in looking over, with madame and the ladies of the court, various goods of Lyons manufacture of which he had made his sister-in-law a present. A court dinner had succeeded, then cards, and afterwards, according to his usual custom, the king, leaving the card tables at eight o'clock, passed into his cabinet in order to work with M. Colbert and M. Fouquet. Raoul entered the ante-chamber at the very moment the two ministers quitted it, and the king, perceiving him through the half-closed door, said, "What do you want, M. de Bragelonne?"

The young man approached : "An audience, sire," he replied, "for the Comte de la Fère, who has just arrived from Blois, and is most anxious to have an interview with your majesty."

"I have an hour to spare between cards and my supper," said the king. "Is the Comte de la Fère ready?"

"He is below, and awaits your majesty's commands."

"Let him come at once," said the king, and five minutes afterwards he entered the presence of Louis XIV. He was received by the king with that gracious kindness of manner which Louis, with a tact beyond his years, reserved for the purpose of gaining those who were not to be conquered by ordinary favours. "Let me hope, comte," said the king, "that you have come to ask me for something."

"I will not conceal from your majesty," replied the comte, "that I am indeed come for that purpose."

"That is well, then," said the king, joyously.

"It is not for myself, sire."

"So much the worse ; but, at least, I will do for your *protégé* what you refuse to permit me to do for you."

"Your majesty encourages me. I have come to speak on behalf of the vicomte de Bragelonne."

"It is the same as if you spoke on your own behalf, comte."

"Not altogether so, sire. I am desirous of obtaining from your majesty at which I cannot do for myself. The vicomte thinks of marrying."

"He is still very young ; but that does not matter. He is an eminently distinguished man. I will choose a wife for him."

"He has already chosen one, sire, and only awaits your majesty's consent."

"It is only a question, then, of signing the marriage contract?" Athos bowed. "Has he chosen a wife whose fortune and position accord with your own views?"

Athos hesitated for a moment. "His affianced wife is of good birth, but has no fortune."

"That is a misfortune which we can remedy."

"You overwhelm me with gratitude, sire ; but your majesty will permit me to offer a remark?"—"Do so comte."

"Your majesty seems to intimate an intention of giving a marriage-portion to this young girl?"—"Certainly."

"I should regret, sire, if the step I have taken towards your majesty should be attended by this result."

"No false delicacy, comte ; what is the bride's name?"

"Mademoiselle Labaume Le Blanc de la Vallière," said Athos, coldly.

"I seem to know that name," said the king, as if reflecting ; "there was a Marquis de la Vallière."

"Yes, sire, it is his daughter."

"But he died, and his widow married again M. de St. Remy, I think, steward of the dowager Madame's household."

"Your majesty is correctly informed."

"More than that, the young lady has lately become one of the princess's maids of honour."

"Your majesty is better acquainted with her history than I am."

The king again reflected, and glancing at the comte's anxious countenance, said : "The young lady does not seem to me to be very pretty, comte."

"I am not quite sure," replied Athos.

"I have seen her, but she did not strike me as being so."

"She seems to be a good and modest girl, but has little beauty, sire."

"Beautiful fair hair, however?"—"I think so."

"And her blue eyes are tolerably good?"—"Yes, sire."

"With regard to beauty, then, the match is but an ordinary one. Now for the money side of the question."

"Fifteen to twenty thousand francs dowry at the very outside, sire ; the lovers are disinterested enough ; for myself, I care little for money."

"For superfluity, you mean ; but a needful amount is of importance. With fifteen thousand francs, without landed property, a woman cannot live at court. We will make up the deficiency ; I will do it for De Bragelonne." The king again remarked the coldness with which Athos received his remark.

"Let us pass from the question of money to that of rank," said Louis XIV. ; "the daughter of the Marquis de la Vallière, that is well enough but there is that excellent St. Rémy, who somewhat damages the credit of the family ; and you, comte, are rather particular, I believe, about your own family."

"Sire, I no longer hold to anything but my devotion to your majesty."

The king again paused. "A moment, comte. You have surprised me in no little degree from the beginning of your conversation. You came to ask me to authorise a marriage, and you seem greatly disturbed in having to make the request. Nay, pardon me, comte, but I am rarely deceived young as I am ; for while with some persons I place my friendship at the disposal of my understanding, with others I call my distrust to my aid by which my discernment is increased. I repeat that you do not prefer your request as though you wished it success."

"Well, sire, that is true."

"I do not understand you, then ; refuse."

"Nay, sire ; I love De Bragelonne with my whole heart ; he is smitten with Mademoiselle de la Vallière, he weaves dreams of bliss for the future ; I am not one who is willing to destroy the illusions of youth. This marriage is objectionable to me, but I implore your majesty to consent to it forthwith, and thus make Raoul happy."

"Tell me comte, is she in love with him?"

"If your majesty requires me to speak candidly, I do not believe in Mademoiselle de la Vallière's affection ; the delight at being at court, the honour of being in the service of Madame, counteract in her head whatever affection she may happen to have in her heart ; it is a marriage similar to many others which already exist at court ; but De Bragelonne wishes it, and let it be so."

"And yet you do not resemble those easy-tempered fathers who make slaves of themselves for their children," said the king.

"I am determined enough against the viciously disposed, but not against men of upright character. Raoul is suffering, and is in great distress of mind ; his disposition, naturally light and cheerful, has become gloomy and melancholy. I do not wish to deprive your majesty of the services I may be able to render."

"I understand you," said the king ; "and what is more, I understand your heart, too, comte."

"There is no occasion, therefore," replied the comte, "to tell your majesty that my object is to make these children, or rather Raoul, happy."

"And I, too, as much as yourself, comte, wish to secure M. de Bragelonne's happiness."

"I only await your majesty's signature. Raoul will have the honour presenting himself before your majesty to receive your consent."

"You are mistaken, comte," said the king, firmly ; "I have just said that I desire to secure M. de Bragelonne's happiness, and from the present moment, therefore, I oppose his marriage."

"But, sire," exclaimed Athos, "your majesty has promised !"

"Not so, comte, I did not promise you, for it is opposed to my own views."

"I appreciate all your majesty's considerate and generous intentions in my behalf; but I take the liberty of recalling to you that I undertook to approach your majesty as an ambassador."

"An ambassador, comte, frequently asks, but does not always obtain what he asks."

"But, sire, it will be such a blow for De Bragelonne."

"My hand shall deal the blow; I will speak to the vicomte."

"Love, sire, is overwhelming in its might."

"Love can be resisted, comte; I myself can assure you of that."

"When one has the soul of a king—your own, for instance, sire."

"Do not make yourself uneasy on the subject. I have certain views for De Bragelonne. I do not say that he shall not marry Mademoiselle de la Vallière, but I do not wish him to marry so young. I do not wish him to marry her until she has acquired a fortune; and he, on his side, no less deserves my favour, such as I wish to confer upon him. In a word, comte, I wish then to wait."

"Yet once more, sire."

"Comte, you told me you came to request a favour."

"Assuredly, sire."

"Grant me one, then, instead; let us speak no longer upon this matter. It is probable that, before long, war may be declared; I require men about me who are unfettered. I should hesitate to send under fire a married man, or a father of a family; I should hesitate, also, on De Bragelonne's account, to endow with a fortune, without some sound reason for it, a young girl, a perfect stranger: such an act would sow jealousy among my nobility." Athos bowed, and remained silent.

"Is that all you had to ask me?" added Louis XIV.

"Absolutely all, sire; and I take my leave of your majesty. Is it, however, necessary that I should inform Raoul?"

"Spare yourself the trouble and annoyance. Tell the vicomte that at my *levée* to-morrow morning I will speak to him. I shall expect you this evening, comte, to join my card-table."

"I am in travelling-costume, sire."

"A day will come, I hope, when you will leave me no more. Before long, comte, the monarchy will be established in such a manner as to enable me to offer a worthy hospitality to all men of your merit."

"Provided, sire, a monarch reigns truly great in the hearts of his subjects, the palace he inhabits matters little, since he is worshipped in a temple." With these words Athos left the cabinet, and found De Bragelonne, who awaited his return.

"Well, monsieur?" said the young man.

"The king, Raoul, is well disposed towards us both; not, perhaps, in the sense you suppose, but he is kind, and generously disposed for our case."

"You have bad news to communicate to me, monsieur," said the young man, turning very pale.

"The king will himself inform you to-morrow morning that it is not bad news."

"The king has not signed, however?"

"The king wishes himself to settle the terms of the contract, and he desires to make it so grand that he requires time for it. Throw the blame on your own impatience than on the king's good feeling towards."

Raoul, in utter consternation, both on account of his knowledge of the count's frankness as well as of his tact, remained plunged in a dull heavy stupor.

"Will you not go with me to my lodgings?" said Athos.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur; I will follow you," he stammered out, following Athos down the staircase.

"Since I am here," said Athos, suddenly, "cannot I see M. d'Artagnan?"

"Shall I show you his apartment?" said De Bragelonne.—"Do so."

"It is on the other staircase."

They altered their course, but as they reached the landing of the grand staircase, Raoul perceived a servant in the Comte de Guiche's livery, who ran towards him as soon as he heard his voice.

"What is it?" said Raoul.

"This note, monsieur. My master heard of your return, and wrote to you without delay. I have been seeking you for the last hour."

Raoul approached Athos as he unsealed the letter, saying, "With your permission, monsieur."—"Certainly."

"Dear Raoul," said the Comte de Guiche, "I have an affair in hand which requires immediate attention. I know you have returned; come to me as soon as possible."

Hardly had he finished reading it, when a servant in the livery of the Duke of Buckingham, turning out of the gallery, recognised Raoul, and approached him respectfully, saying, "From his grace, monsieur."

"Well, Raoul, as I see you are already as busy as a general of an army, I shall leave you, and will find M. d'Artagnan myself."

"You will excuse me, I trust," said Raoul.

"Yes, yes, I excuse you; adieu, Raoul. You will find me at my apartments until to-morrow; during the day I may set out for Blois, unless I have orders to the contrary."

"I shall present my respects to you to-morrow, monsieur."

When Athos had left, Raoul opened Buckingham's letter.

"Monsieur de Bragelonne," said the duke, "you are, of all the Frenchmen I have known, the one with whom I am most pleased. I am about to put your friendship to the proof. I have received a certain message written in very good French. As I am an Englishman, I am afraid of not comprehending it very clearly. The letter has a good name attached to it, and that is all I can tell you. Will you be good enough to come and see me, for I am told you have arrived from Blois? Your devoted,

"VILLIERS, Duke of Buckingham."

"I am going now to see your master," said Raoul to De Guiche's servant as he dismissed him; "and I shall be with the Duke of Buckingham in an hour," he added, dismissing with these words the duke's messenger.

## CHAPTER XCIV.

### SWORD-THRUSTS IN THE WATER.

RAOUL, on betaking himself to De Guiche, found him conversing with Wardes and Manicamp. De Wardes, since the affair of the barricade, had treated Raoul as a stranger. It might have been imagined that nothing at all had passed between them; only they behaved as if they were not acquainted. As Raoul entered, De Guiche walked up to him; and Raoul

he grasped his friend's hand, glanced rapidly at his two young companions, hoping to be able to read on their faces what was passing in their minds. De Wardes was cold and impenetrable, and Manicamp seemed absorbed in the contemplation of some trimming to his dress. De Guiche led Raoul to an adjoining cabinet, and made him sit down, saying, "How do you look!"

"That is singular," replied Raoul, "for I am far from being in good spirits."

"It is your case, then, Raoul, as it is my own, that your love affair does not progress satisfactorily."

"So much the better, comte, as far as you are concerned; the worst news, that indeed which would distress me most of all, would be good news."

"In that case do not distress yourself, for, not only am I very unhappy, but, what is more, I see others about me who are happy."

"Really, I do not understand you," replied Raoul; "explain yourself."

"You will soon learn. I have tried, but in vain, to overcome the feeling which you saw dawn in me, increase in me, and take such entire possession of my whole being. I have summoned all your advice and all my own strength to my aid. I have well weighed the unfortunate affair in which I have embarked; I have sounded its depths; that it is an abyss, I am well aware, but it matters little, for I shall pursue my own course."

"This is madness, De Guiche, you cannot advance another step without risking your own ruin to-day, perhaps your life to-morrow."

"Whatever may happen, I have done with reflections: listen."

"And you hope to succeed; you believe that Madame will love you?"

"Raoul, I believe nothing; I hope, because hope exists in man, and never abandons him till he dies."

"But, admitting that you obtain the happiness you covet, even then, you are more certainly lost than if you had failed in obtaining it."

"I beseech you, Raoul, not to interrupt me any more; you could never convince me, for I tell you beforehand, I do not wish to be convinced; I have gone so far that I cannot recede; I have suffered so much, that death itself would be a boon. I no longer love to madness, Raoul, I am in a perfect rage of jealousy."

Raoul struck both his hands together with an expression resembling anger. "Well?" said he.

"Well or ill, matters little. This is what I claim from you, my friend, my almost brother. During the last three days, Madame has been living in a perfect intoxication of gaiety. On the first day, I dared not look at her; I hated her for not having been as unhappy as myself. The next day I could not bear her out of my sight; and she, Raoul—at least I thought I remarked it—she looked at me, if not with pity, at least with gentleness. But between her looks and mine, a shadow intervened: another's smile invited her smile. Beside her horse another's always allops, which is not mine; in her ear another's caressing voice, not mine, ceaselessly vibrates. Raoul, for three days past my brain has been on fire; fire courses through my veins. That shadow must be driven away, that smile must be quenched; that voice must be silenced."

"You wish Monsieur's death," exclaimed Raoul.

"No, no, I am not jealous of the husband; I am jealous of the lover."

"Of the lover?" said Raoul.

"Have you not observed it, you, who were formerly so keen-sighted?"

"Are you jealous of the Duke of Buckingham?"

"To the very death!"

"Again jealous?"

"This time the affair will be easy to arrange between us; I have taken the initiative, and have sent him a letter."

"It was you, then, who wrote to him!"

"How do you know that?"

"I know it, because he told me so. Look at this;" and he handed to De Guiche the letter which he had received nearly at the same moment as his own. De Guiche read it eagerly, and said, "He is a brave man, and more than that, a gallant man."

"Most certainly the duke is a gallant man; I need not ask if you wrote to him in a similar style."

"I will show you my letter when you call on him on my behalf."

"But that is almost out of the question."—"What is?"

"That I should call on him for that purpose."—"Why so?"

"The duke consults me as you do."

"I suppose you will give me the preference. Listen to me, Raoul, I wish you to tell his grace—it is a very simple matter—that to-day, to-morrow, the following day, or any other day he may choose, I wish to meet him at Vincennes."

"Reflect, De Guiche."

"I thought I had already said that I had reflected."

"The duke is a stranger here; he is on a mission which renders his person inviolable. . . . Vincennes is close to the Bastille."

"The consequences concern me."

"But the motive for this meeting. What motive do you wish me to assign?"

"Be perfectly easy on that score, he will not ask any. The duke must be as sick of me as I am of him. I implore you, therefore, to seek the duke, and if it is necessary to entreat him to accept my offer, I will do so."

"That is useless. The duke has already informed me that he wishes to speak to me. The duke is now playing cards with the king. Let us both go there. I will draw him aside in the gallery; you will remain aloof. Two words will be sufficient."

"That is well arranged. I shall take De Wardes to keep me in countenance."

"Why not Manicamp? De Wardes can rejoin us at any time; we can leave him here."

"Yes, that is true."

"He knows nothing?"

"Positively nothing. You continue still on an unfriendly footing, then?"

"Has he not told you anything?"—"Nothing."

"I do not like the man, and, as I never liked him, the result is, that I am on no worse terms with him to-day than I was yesterday."

"Let us go, then."

The four descended the stairs. De Guiche's carriage was waiting at the door, and took them to the Palais Royal. As they were going along, Raoul was engaged in framing some scheme. The sole depositary of two secrets, he did not despair of concluding some arrangement between the two parties. He knew the influence he exercised over Buckingham, and the ascendancy he had acquired over De Guiche, and affairs did not look utterly despairing to him. On their arrival in the gallery, dazzling with the blaze of light, where the most beautiful and illustrious women of the court moved to and fro, like stars in their atmosphere.

light, Raoul could not prevent himself for a moment forgetting De Guiche in order to seek out Louise, who, amidst her companions, like a dove completely fascinated, gazed long and fixedly upon the royal circle, which glittered with jewels and gold. All the members of it were standing, the king alone being seated. Raoul perceived Buckingham, who was standing a few paces from Monsieur, in a group of French and English, who were admiring his haughty carriage and the incomparable magnificence of his costume. Some few of the older courtiers remembered having seen the father, and their remembrance was in no way prejudicial to the son.

Buckingham was conversing with Fouquet, who was talking with him aloud of Belle-Isle. "I cannot speak to him at present," said Raoul.

"Wait, then, and choose your opportunity, but finish everything speedily. I am on thorns."

"See, our deliverer approaches," said Raoul, perceiving D'Artagnan, who, magnificently dressed in his new uniform of captain of the musketeers, had just made his victorious entry in the gallery; and he advanced towards D'Artagnan.

"The Comte de la Fère has been looking for you, chevalier," said Raoul.

"Yes," replied D'Artagnan, "I have just left him."

"I thought you would have passed a portion of the evening together."

"We have arranged to meet again."

As he answered Raoul, his absent looks were directed on all sides, as if seeking some one in the crowd or looking for something in the room. Suddenly his gaze became fixed, like that of an eagle on its prey. Raoul followed the direction of his glance, and noticed that De Guiche and D'Artagnan saluted each other, but he could not distinguish at whom the captain's inquiring and haughty glance was directed.

"Chevalier," said Raoul, "there is no one here but yourself who can render me a service."

"What is it, my dear vicomte?"

"It is simply to go and interrupt the Duke of Buckingham, to whom I wish to say two words, and, as the duke is conversing with M. Fouquet, you understand that it would not do for me to throw myself into the middle of the conversation."

"Ah, ah, is M. Fouquet there?" inquired D'Artagnan.

"Do you not see him?"

"Yes, now I do. But do you think I have a greater right than you have?"

"You are a far more important personage."

"Yes, you're right; I am captain of the musketeers; I have had the most promised me so long, and have enjoyed its dignity for so brief a period, that I am always forgetting my dignity."

"You will do me the service, will you not?"

"M. Fouquet—the deuce!"

"Are you not on good terms with him?"

"It is rather he who may not be on good terms with me; however, since it must be done some day or another——"

"Stay; I think he is looking at you; or is it likely that it might be——"

"No, no; don't deceive yourself, it is indeed me for whom this honour is intended."

"The opportunity is a good one, then."

"Do you think so?"—"Pray go."

"Well, I will."

De Guiche had not removed his eyes from Raoul, who made a sign to him that all was arranged. D'Artagnan walked straight up to the group, and civilly saluted M. Fouquet as well as the others.

"Good evening, M. d'Artagnan; we were speaking of Belle-Isle," said Fouquet, with that usage of society, and that perfect knowledge of the language of looks, which require half a lifetime thoroughly to acquire, and which some persons, notwithstanding all their study, never attain.

"Of Belle-Isle-en-Mer! Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan. "It belongs to you, I believe, M. Fouquet?"

"M. Fouquet has just told me that he had presented it to the king," said Buckingham.

"Do you know Belle-Isle, chevalier?" inquired Fouquet.

"I have only been there once," replied D'Artagnan, with readiness and good humour.

"Did you remain there long?"—"Scarcely a day."

"Did you see much of it while you were there?"

"All that could be seen in a day."

"A great deal can be seen with observation as keen as yours," said Fouquet; at which D'Artagnan bowed.

During this Raoul made a sign to Buckingham. "M. Fouquet," said Buckingham, "I leave the captain with you; he is more learned than I am in bastions, and scarps, and counter-scarps, and I will join one of my friends, who has just beckoned to me." Saying this, Buckingham disengaged himself from the group, and advanced towards Raoul, stopping for a moment at the table where the queen-mother, the young queen, and the king were playing together. "Now, Raoul," said De Guiche, "there he is; be firm and quick."

Buckingham, having made some complimentary remark to Madame, continued his way towards Raoul, who advanced to meet him, while De Guiche remained in his place, though he followed him with his eyes. The manœuvre was so arranged that the young men met in an open space which was left vacant between the group of players and the gallery, where they walked, stopping now and then for the purpose of saying a few words to some of the graver courtiers who were walking there. At the moment when the two lines were about to unite, they were broken by a third. It was Monsieur, who advanced towards the Duke of Buckingham. Monsieur had his most engaging smile on his red and perfumed lips.

"My dear duke," said he, with the most affectionate politeness, "is really true what I have just been told?"

Buckingham turned round; he had not noticed Monsieur approach, but had merely heard his voice. He started, in spite of his command over himself, and a slight pallor overspread his face. "Monseigneur," he asked, "what has been told you that surprises you so much?"

"That which throws me into despair, and will, in truth, be a real cause of mourning for the whole court."

"Your highness is very kind, for I perceive that you allude to my departure."

"Precisely."

Guiche had overheard the conversation from where he was standing and started in his turn. "His departure," he murmured. "What does say?"

Philip continued with the same gracious air, "I can easily conceive, monsieur, why the king of Great Britain recalls you; we all know that King Charles II., who appreciates true gentlemen, cannot dispense with

you. But it cannot be supposed we can let you go without great regret ; and I beg you to receive the expression of my own."

"Believe me, monseigneur," said the duke, "that if I quit the court of France——"

"It is because you are recalled ; but, if you should suppose that the expression of my own wish on the subject might possibly have some influence with the king, I will gladly volunteer to entreat his majesty Charles II. to leave you with us a little while longer."

"I am overwhelmed, monseigneur, by so much kindness," replied Buckingham ; "but I have received positive commands. My residence in France was limited ; I have prolonged it at the risk of displeasing my gracious sovereign. It is only this very day that I recollected I ought to have set off four days ago."

"Indeed," said Monsieur.

"Yes ; but," added Buckingham, raising his voice in such a manner that the princess could hear him,—“but I resemble that dweller in the East, who turned mad, and remained so for several days, owing to a delightful dream that he had had, and who one day awoke, if not completely cured, in some respects rational at least. The court of France has its intoxicating properties, which are not unlike this dream, my lord ; but at last I wake and leave it. I shall be unable, therefore, to prolong my residence as your highness has so kindly invited me."

"When do you leave?" inquired Philip, with an expression full of interest.

"To-morrow, monseigneur. My carriages have been ready for three days past."

The Duc d'Orléans made a movement of the head, which seemed to signify, "Since you are determined, duke, there is nothing to be said." Buckingham returned the gesture, concealing under a smile a contraction of his heart, and then Monsieur moved away in the same direction by which he had approached. At the same moment, however, De Guiche advanced from the opposite direction. Raoul feared that the impatient young man might possibly make the proposition himself, and hurried forward before him.

"No, no, Raoul, all is useless now," said Guiche, holding both his hands towards the duke, and leading him himself behind a column. "Forgive me, duke, for what I wrote to you, I was mad ; give me back my letter."

"It is true," said the Duke, "you cannot owe me a grudge any longer now."

"Forgive me, Duke ; my friendship, my lasting friendship is yours."

"There is certainly no reason why you should bear me any ill-will from the moment I leave her never to see her again."

Raoul heard these words, and comprehending that his presence was now useless between the two young men, who had now only friendly words to exchange, withdrew a few paces ; a movement which brought him closer to De Wardes, who was conversing with the Chevalier de Lorraine respecting the departure of Buckingham. "A wise retreat," said De Wardes.

"Why so?"

"Because the dear Duke saves a sword-thrust by it." At which reply both began to laugh.

Raoul, indignant, turned round frowningly, flushed with anger, and his lip curling with disdain. The Chevalier de Lorraine turned away upon

his heel, but De Wardes remained firm and waited. "You will not break yourself of the habit," said Raoul to De Wardes, "of insulting the absent ; yesterday it was M. d'Artagnan, to-day it is the Duke of Buckingham."

"You know very well, monsieur," returned De Wardes, "that I sometimes insult those who are present."

De Wardes touched Raoul, their shoulders met, their faces were bent towards each other, as if mutually to inflame each other by the fire of their breath and of their anger. It could be seen that the one was at the height of his anger, the other at the end of his patience. Suddenly a voice was heard behind them full of grace and courtesy, saying, "I believe I heard my name pronounced."

They turned round and saw D'Artagnan, who, with a smiling eye, and a cheerful face, had just placed his hand on De Wardes' shoulder. Raoul stepped back to make room for the musketeer. De Wardes trembled from head to foot, turned pale, but did not move. D'Artagnan, still with the same smile, took the place which Raoul abandoned to him. "Thank you, my dear Raoul," he said. "M. de Wardes, I wish to talk with you. Do not leave us, Raoul ; every one can hear what I have to say to M. de Wardes." His smile immediately faded away, and his glance became cold and sharp as a sword.

"I am at your orders, monsieur," said De Wardes.

"For a very long time," resumed D'Artagnan, "I have sought an opportunity of conversing with you ; to-day is the first time I have found it. The place is badly chosen, I admit ; but you will perhaps have the goodness to accompany me to my apartments, which are on the staircase at the end of this gallery."

"I follow you, monsieur," said De Wardes.

"Are you alone here ?" said D'Artagnan.

"No ; I have M. Manicamp, and M. de Guiche, two of my friends."

"That's well," said D'Artagnan ; "but two persons are not sufficient ; you will be able to find a few others, I trust."

"Certainly," said the young man, who did not know the object D'Artagnan had in view. "As many as you please."

"Are they friends ?"—"Yes, monsieur."

"Real friends ?"—"No doubt of it."

"Very well, get a good supply, then. Do you come too, Raoul ; bring M. de Guiche and the Duke of Buckingham."

"What a disturbance," replied De Wardes, attempting to smile. The captain slightly signed to him with his hand, as though to recommend him to be patient, and then led the way to his apartments.

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## CHAPTER XCV.

### SWORD-THRUSTS IN THE WATER (CONCLUDED).

D'ARTAGNAN'S apartment was not unoccupied ; for the Comte de la Fère, seated in the recess of a window, awaited him. "Well," said he to D'Artagnan, as he saw him enter.

"Well," said the latter, "M. de Wardes has done me the honour to pay me a visit, in company with some of his own friends, as well as of ours." In fact, behind the musketeer appeared De Wardes and Manicamp, followed by De Guiche and Buckingham, who looked surprised, not knowing what was expected of them. Raoul was accompanied by two or three

gentlemen ; and, as he entered, glanced round the room, and perceiving the comte, he went and placed himself by his side. D'Artagnan received his visitors with all the courtesy he was capable of ; he preserved his moved and unconcerned look. All the persons present were men of distinction, occupying posts of honour and credit at the court. After he had apologized to each of them for any inconvenience he might have put them to, he turned towards De Wardes, who, in spite of his great self-command, could not prevent his face betraying some surprise mingled with not a little uneasiness. " Now, monsieur," said D'Artagnan, " since we are no longer within the precincts of the king's palace, and since we can speak out without failing in respect to propriety, I will inform you why I have taken the liberty to request you to visit me here, and why I have invited these gentlemen to be present at the same time. My friend, the Comte de la Fère, has acquainted me with the injurious reports you are spreading about myself. You have stated that you regard me as your mortal enemy, because I was, so you affirm, that of your father." " Perfectly true, monsieur, I have said so," replied De Wardes, whose pallid face became slightly tinged with colour.

" You accuse me, therefore, of a crime, or a fault, or of some mean and cowardly act. Have the goodness to state your charge against me in precise terms."

" In the presence of witnesses?"

" Most certainly in the presence of witnesses : and you see I have selected them as being experienced in affairs of honour."

" You do not appreciate my delicacy, monsieur. I have accused you, it is true ; but I have kept the nature of the accusation a perfect secret. I have not entered into any details ; but have rested satisfied by expressing my hatred in the presence of those on whom a duty was almost imposed on me to acquaint you with it. You have not taken the discreteness I have shown into consideration, although you were interested in remaining silent. You can hardly recognise your habitual prudence in that, M. d'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan, who was quietly biting the corner of his moustache, said, " I have already had the honour to beg you to state the particulars of the grievances you say you have against me."

" Aloud?"

" Certainly, aloud."

" In that case, I will speak."

" Speak, monsieur," said D'Artagnan, bowing ; " we are all listening to you."

" Well, monsieur, it is not a question of a personal injury towards myself, but of one towards my father."

" That you have already stated."

" Yes ; but there are certain subjects which are only approached with great hesitation."

" If that hesitation, in your case, really does exist, I entreat you to overcome it."

" Even if it refer to a disgraceful action?"

" Yes ; in every and any case."

Those who were present at this scene had, at first, looked at each other with a good deal of uneasiness. They were reassured, however, when they saw that D'Artagnan manifested no emotion whatever. De Wardes still maintained the same unbroken silence. " Speak, monsieur," said the musketeer ; " you see you are keeping us waiting."

" Listen, then :—My father loved a woman of noble birth, and this

woman loved my father." D'Artagnan and Athos exchanged looks. De Wardes continued : " M. d'Artagnan found some letters which indicated a rendezvous, substituted himself, under a disguise, for the person who was expected, and took advantage of the darkness."

"That is perfectly true," said D'Artagnan.

A slight murmur was heard from those present. "Yes, I was guilty of that dishonourable action. You should have added, monsieur, since you are so impartial, that, at the period when the circumstance which you have just related, happened, I was not one-and-twenty years of age."

"The action is not the less shameful on that account," said De Wardes ; "and it is quite sufficient for a gentleman to have attained the age of reason, to avoid committing any act of indelicacy."

A renewed murmur was heard, but this time of astonishment, and almost of doubt.

"It was a most shameful deception, I admit," said D'Artagnan, "and I have not waited for M. de Wardes' reproaches to reproach myself for it, and very bitterly too. Age has, however, made me more reasonable, and, above all, more upright : and this injury has been atoned for by a long and lasting regret. But I appeal to you, gentlemen ; this affair took place in 1626, at a period, happily for yourselves, known to you by tradition only at a period when love was not over scrupulous, when consciences did not distil, as in the present day, poison and bitterness. We were young soldiers, always fighting, or being attacked, our swords always in our hands, or at least ready to be drawn from their sheaths. Death then always stared us in the face, war hardened us, and the cardinal pressed us sorely. I have repented of it, and more than that—I still repent it, M. de Wardes."

"I can well understand that, monsieur, for the action itself needed repentance ; but you were not the less the cause of that lady's disgrace. She of whom you have been speaking, covered with shame, borne down by the affront she had had wrought upon her, fled, quitted France, and no one ever knew what became of her."

"Stay," said the Comte de la Fère, stretching his hand towards De Wardes, with a peculiar smile upon his face, "you are mistaken ; she was seen ; and there are persons even now present, who, having often heard her spoken of, will easily recognise her by the description I am about to give. She was about five-and-twenty years of age, slender in form, of a pale complexion, and fair-haired ; she was married in England."

"Married?" exclaimed De Wardes.

"So, you were not aware she was married? You see we are far better informed than yourself. Do you happen to know she was usually styled 'my lady,' without the addition of any name to that description?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Good heavens!" murmured Buckingham.

"Very well, monsieur. That woman, who came from England, returned to England after having thrice attempted M. d'Artagnan's life. That was but just, you will say, since M. d'Artagnan had insulted her. But that which was not just was, that, when in England, this woman, by her seductions, completely enslaved a young man in the service of Lord Winter, by name Felton. You change colour, my lord," said Athos, turning to the Duke of Buckingham, "and your eyes kindle with anger and sorrow. Let your grace finish the recital, then, and tell M. de Wardes who this woman was who placed the knife in the hand of your father's murderer."

A cry escaped from the lips of all present. The young duke passed his handkerchief across his forehead, which was covered with perspiration.

dead silence ensued among the spectators. "You see, M. de Wardes," said D'Artagnan, whom this recital had impressed more and more, as his own recollection revived as Athos spoke, "you see, that my crime did not cause the destruction of any one's soul, and that the soul in question may fairly be considered to have been altogether lost before my regret. It is, however, an act of conscience on my part. Now this matter is settled, therefore, it remains for me to ask, with the greatest humility, your forgiveness for this shameless action, as most certainly I should have asked it of your father, if he were still alive, and if I had met him after my return to France, subsequent to the death of King Charles I."

"That is too much, M. d'Artagnan," exclaimed many voices, with animation.

"No, gentlemen," said the captain. "And now, M. de Wardes, I hope all is finished between us, and that you will have no further occasion to speak ill of me again. Do you consider it completely settled?"

De Wardes bowed, and muttered to himself inarticulately.

"I trust also," said D'Artagnan, approaching the young man closely, "that you will no longer speak ill of any one, as it seems you have the unfortunate habit of doing; for a man so puritanically conscientious as you are, who can reproach an old soldier for a youthful freak five-and-thirty years after it has happened, will allow me to ask whether you, who advocate such excessive purity of conscience, will undertake on your side to do nothing contrary either to conscience or a principle of honour. And now, listen attentively to what I am going to say, M. de Wardes, in conclusion. Take care that no tale, with which your name may be associated, reaches my ear."

"Monsieur," said De Wardes, "it is useless threatening to no purpose." "I have not yet finished, M. de Wardes; and you must listen to me till further." The circle of listeners, full of eager curiosity, drew closer together. "You spoke just now of the honour of a woman and of the honour of your father. We were glad to hear you speak in that manner; for it is pleasing to think that such a sentiment of delicacy and rectitude, and which did not exist, it seems, in our minds, lives in our children; and it is delightful too, to see a young man, at an age when men from habit become the destroyers of the honour of women, respect and defend it."

De Wardes bit his lips and clenched his hands, evidently much disturbed to learn how this discourse, the commencement of which was pronounced in so threatening a manner, would terminate.

"How did it happen, then, that you allowed yourself to say to M. de Wardes that he did not know who his mother was?"

Raoul's eye flashed, as, darting forward, he exclaimed,—"Chevalier, this is a personal affair of my own!" At which exclamation a smile, full of irony, passed across De Wardes' face. D'Artagnan put Raoul aside, and said,—"Do not interrupt me, young man." And looking at De Wardes in an authoritative manner, he continued:—"I am now dealing with a matter which cannot be settled by means of the sword; I discuss it before men of honour, all of whom have more than once had their swords in their hands in affairs of honour. I selected them expressly. These gentlemen well know that every secret for which men fight ceases to be a secret. I again put my question to M. de Wardes. What was the subject of conversation when you offended this young man, in offending his father and mother at the same time?"

"It seems to me," returned De Wardes, "that liberty of speech is

allowed, when it is ready to be supported by every means which a man of courage has at his disposal."

"Tell me what the means are by which a man of courage can sustain a slanderous expression."

"The sword."

"You fail, not only in logic, in your argument, but in religion and honour. You expose the lives of many others, without referring to your own, which seems to be full of hazard. Besides, fashions pass away, monsieur, and the fashion of duelling has passed away, without referring in any way to the edicts of his majesty which forbid it. Therefore, in order to be consistent with your own chivalrous notions, you will at once apologise to M. de Bragelonne; you will tell him how much you regret having spoken so lightly, and that the nobility and purity of his race are inscribed, not in his heart alone, but, still more, in every action of his life. You will do and say this, M. de Wardes, as I, an old officer, did and said just now to your boy's moustache."

"And if I refuse?" inquired De Wardes.

"In that case the result will be——"

"That which you think you will prevent," said De Wardes, laughing, "the result will be that your conciliatory address will end in a violation of the king's prohibition."

"Not so," said the captain, "you are quite mistaken."

"What will be the result, then?"

"The result will be, that I shall go to the king, with whom I am on tolerably good terms, to whom I have been happy enough to render certain services, dating from a period when you were not born, and who, at my request, has just sent me an order in blank for M. Baisemeaux de Montlezun, governor of the Bastille; and I shall say to the king,—'Sire, a man has cowardly insulted M. de Bragelonne, in insulting his mother; I have written this man's name upon the *lettre de cachet* which your majesty has been kind enough to give me, so that M. de Wardes is in the Bastille for three years.'" And D'Artagnan, drawing the order signed by the king from his pocket, held it towards De Wardes. Remarking that the young man was not quite convinced, and received the warning as an idle threat, he shrugged his shoulders, and walked leisurely towards the table, upon which lay a writing-case and a pen, the length of which would have terrified the topographical Porthos. De Wardes then saw that nothing could well be more seriously intended than the threat in question, for the Bastille, even at that period, was already held in dread. He advanced a step towards Raoul, and, in an almost unintelligible style, said,—"I offer my apologies in the terms which M. d'Artagnan just dictated, and which I am forced to make to you."

"One moment, monsieur," said the musketeer, with the greatest tranquillity, "you mistake the terms of the apology. I did not say, 'and I am forced to make;' I said, 'and which my conscience induces me to make.' This latter expression, believe me, is better than the former; and it will be far preferable, since it will be the most truthful expression of your own sentiments."

"I subscribe to it," said De Wardes; "but admit, gentlemen, that thrust of a sword through the body, as was the custom formerly, was far better than tyranny like this."

"No, monsieur," replied Buckingham; "for the sword-thrust, when received, was no indication that a particular person was right or wrong; only showed that he was more or less skilful in the use of the weapon."

"Monsieur!" exclaimed De Wardes.

"There now," interrupted D'Artagnan, "you are going to say something very rude, and I am rendering you a service in stopping you in time."

"Is that all, monsieur?" inquired De Wardes.

"Absolutely everything," replied D'Artagnan; "and these gentlemen, as well as myself, are quite satisfied with you."

"Believe me, monsieur, that your reconciliations are not successful."

"In what way?"

"Because, as we are now about to separate, I would wager that M. de Raguellonne and myself are greater enemies than ever."

"You are deceived, monsieur, as far as I am concerned," returned Raoul; "for I do not retain the slightest animosity in my heart against you."

This last blow overwhelmed De Wardes; he cast his eyes around him like a man utterly bewildered. D'Artagnan saluted most courteously the gentlemen who had been present at the explanation, and every one, on leaving the room, shook hands with him; but not one hand was held out towards De Wardes. "Oh!" exclaimed the young man, abandoning himself to the rage which consumed him, "can I not find some one on whom to wreak my vengeance?"

"You can, monsieur, for I am here!" whispered a voice full of menace in his ear.

De Wardes turned round, and saw the Duke of Buckingham, who, having probably remained behind with that intention, had just approached him. "You, monsieur?" exclaimed De Wardes.

"Yes, I! I am no subject of the King of France; I am not going to remain on the territory, since I am about setting off for England. I have accumulated in my heart such a mass of despair and rage, that I too, like myself, need to revenge myself upon some one. I approve M. d'Artagnan's principles extremely, but I am not bound to apply them to you. I am an Englishman, and, in my turn, I propose to you what you proposed to others to no purpose. Since you, therefore, are so terribly incensed, take me as a remedy. In thirty-four hours' time I shall be at Calais. Come with me; the journey will appear shorter if together than if alone. We will fight, when we get there, upon the sands which are covered by the ebbing tide, and which form part of the French territory during six hours of the day, but belong to the territory of Heaven during the other six."

"I accept willingly," said De Wardes.

"I assure you," said the duke, "that, if you kill me, you will be rendering me an infinite service."

"I will do my utmost to be agreeable to you, duke," said De Wardes. "Is agreed, then, that I carry you off with me?"

"I shall be at your commands. I required some real danger and some risk to run, to tranquillise me."

In that case, I think you have met with what you are looking for. Farewell, M. de Wardes; to-morrow morning my valet will tell you the exact hour of departure. We will travel together like two excellent friends. I generally travel as fast as I can. Adieu!" Buckingham saluted De Wardes, and returned towards the king's apartments. De Wardes, irritated beyond measure, left the Palais Royal, and hurried through the streets homeward to the house where he lodged.

## CHAPTER XCVI.

## BAISEMEAUX DE MONTLEZUN.

AFTER the rather severe lesson administered to De Wardes, Athos and D'Artagnan together descended the staircase which led to the courtyard of the Palais Royal. "You perceive," said Athos to D'Artagnan, "that Raoul cannot, sooner or later, avoid a duel with De Wardes; for De Wardes is as brave as he is vicious and wicked."

"I know these fellows well," replied D'Artagnan; "I have had an affair with the father. I assure you that, although at that time I had good muscles and a sort of brute courage—I assure you the father did me some mischief. But you should have seen how I fought it out with him; and Athos, such encounters never take place in these times! I had a hand which could never remain at rest—a hand like quicksilver; you knew its quality, for you have seen me at work. My sword was no longer a piece of steel; it was a serpent which assumed every form and every length, seeking where it might thrust its head—in other words, where it might find its bite. I advanced half a dozen paces, then three, and then, body to body, I pressed my antagonist closely; then I darted back again a few paces. No human power could resist that ferocious ardour. Well, De Wardes, the father, with the bravery of his race, with his dogged courage, occupied a good deal of my time; and my fingers at the end of the engagement were, I well remember, tired enough."

"It is, then, as I said," resumed Athos: "the son will always be looking out for Raoul, and will end by meeting him; and Raoul can easily be found when he is sought for."

"Agreed. But Raoul calculates well: he bears no grudge against De Wardes—he has said so; he will wait until he is provoked, and in that case his position is a good one. The king will not be able to get out of temper about the matter; besides, we shall know how to pacify his majesty. But why so full of these fears and anxieties? You don't easily get alarmed."

"I will tell you what makes me anxious. Raoul is to see the king to-morrow, when his majesty will inform him of his wishes respecting a certain marriage. Raoul, loving as he does, will get out of temper; and once in an angry mood, if he were to meet De Wardes, the shell will explode."

"We will prevent the explosion."

"Not I," said Athos, "for I must return to Blois. All this gilded elegance of the court, all these intrigues, disgust me; I am no longer a young man who can make his terms with the meannesses of the present. I have read in the great Book of God many things too beautiful and comprehensive to take any interest in the little trifling phrases which men whisper among themselves when they wish to deceive others. In short, word, I am sick of Paris wherever and whenever you are not with me, and as I cannot have you always, I wish to return to Blois."

"How wrong you are, Athos—how you gainsay your origin and the destiny of your noble nature! Men of your stamp are created to continue to the very last moment, in full possession of their great faculties. Look at my sword, a Spanish blade, the one I wore at Rochelle; it served me for thirty years without fail. One day in the winter it fell upon the marble floor of the Louvre and was broken. I had a hunting-knife made of steel which will last a hundred years yet. You, Athos, with your loyalty, your frankness, your cool courage, and your sound information, are the very

gs need to warn and direct them. Remain here ; Monsieur Foul not last so long as my Spanish blade.”  
t possible,” said Athos, smilingly, “that my friend, D’Artagnan, er having raised me to the skies, making me an object of worship, e down from the top of Olympus, and hurls me to the ground ? I ore exalted ambition, D’Artagnan. To be a minister—to be a ever ! Am I not still greater ? I am nothing. I remember having ou occasionally call me ‘the great Athos ;’ I defy you, therefore, if minister, to continue to bestow that title upon me. No, no ; I do not yself in this manner.”

will not speak of it any more, then ;—renounce everything, even therly feeling which unites us.”  
s almost cruel, what you say.”

Artagnan pressed Athos’ hand warmly. “No, no ; renounce every- without fear. Raoul can get on without you ; I am at Paris.”  
that case I shall return to Blois. We will take leave of each other to to-morrow at daybreak I shall be on my horse again.”  
u cannot imagine your hotel alone ; why did you not bring Grimaud ou ?” and “

rimaud takes his rest now ; he goes to bed early, for my poor old t gets easily fatigued. He came from Blois with me, and I com- him to remain within doors ; for if, in retracing the forty leagues separate us from Blois, he needed to draw breath even, he would hout a murmur. But I don’t want to lose Grimaud.”

u shall have one of my musketeers to carry a torch for you. *Holà !* one there,” called out D’Artagnan, leaning over the gilded balus- the heads of seven or eight musketeers appeared,—“I wish some man who is so disposed, to escort the Comte de la Fère,” cried agnan.

Thank you for your readiness, gentlemen,” said Athos ; “I regret to occasion to trouble you in this manner.”  
would willingly escort the Comte de la Fère,” said some one, “if I had o speak to Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

Who is that ?” said D’Artagnan, looking into the darkness.  
Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

Heaven forgive me, if that is Monsieur Baisemeaux’s voice.”  
t is, monsieur.”

What are you doing in the courtyard, my dear Baisemeaux ?”  
am waiting your orders, my dear Monsieur d’Artagnan.”

Wretch that I am,” thought D’Artagnan ; “true, you have been told, I ose, that some one was to be arrested, and have come yourself, instead nding an officer ?”

came because I had occasion to speak to you.”  
You did not send to me ?”

waited until you were disengaged,” said Monsieur Baisemeaux, timidly.  
leave you, D’Artagnan,” said Athos.

Not before I have presented Monsieur Baisemeaux de Montlezun, the ernor of the Bastille.”

Baisemeaux and Athos saluted each other.

Surely you must know each other,” added D’Artagnan.

I have an indistinct recollection of Monsieur Baisemeaux,” said Athos.  
You remember my dear Baisemeaux, that king’s guardsman with m we used formerly to have such delightful meetings in the cardinal’s

"Perfectly," said Athos, taking leave of him with affability.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Fère, whose *nom de guerre* was Athos," whispered D'Artagnan to Baisemeaux.

"Yes, yes ; a brave man, one of the celebrated four."

"Precisely so. But, my dear Baisemeaux, shall we talk now?"

"If you please."

"In the first place, as for the orders—there are none. The king does not intend to arrest the person in question."

"So much the worse," said Baisemeaux with a sigh.

"What do you mean by so much the worse?" exclaimed D'Artagnan laughing.

"No doubt of it," returned the governor, "my prisoners are my income."

"I beg your pardon, I did not see it in that light."

"And so there are no orders," repeated Baisemeaux, with a sigh. "What an admirable situation yours is, captain," he continued, after a pause, "captain-lieutenant of the musketeers."

"Oh, it is good enough ; but I don't see why you should envy me ; you are governor of the Bastille, the first castle in France."

"I am well aware of that," said Baisemeaux, in a low tone.

"You say that like a man confessing his sins. I would willingly exchange my profits for yours."

"Don't speak of profits to me, if you wish to save me the bitterest anguish of mind."

"Why do you look first on one side and then on the other, as if you were afraid of being arrested yourself, you whose business it is to arrest others?"

"I was looking to see whether any one could see or listen to you. It would be safer to confer more in private, if you would grant me a little favour."

"Baisemeaux, you seem to forget we are acquaintances of five-and-thirty years' standing. Don't assume such sanctified airs ; make yourself comfortable ; I don't eat governors of the Bastille raw."

"Heaven be praised !"

"Come into the courtyard with me ; it's a beautiful moonlight night and we will walk up and down, arm in arm, under the trees, while you tell me a beautiful tale." He drew the doleful governor into the courtyard, took him by the arm as he had said, and, in his rough, good-humoured way, cried : "With it, rattle away, Baisemeaux ; what have you got to say?"

"It's a long story."

"You prefer your own lamentations, then ; my opinion is, it will be longer than ever. I'll wager you are making fifty thousand francs out of your pigeons in the Bastille."

"Would to heaven that were the case, M. d'Artagnan."

"You surprise me, Baisemeaux ; just look at yourself, *vous faites l'honorable contrit*. I should like to show you your face in a glass, and you would see how plump and florid-looking you are, as fat and round as a cheese with eyes like lighted coals ; and if it were not for that ugly wrinkle I try to cultivate on your forehead, you would hardly look fifty years old, you are sixty, if I am not mistaken."—"All quite true."

"Of course I knew it was true, as true as the fifty thousand francs profit you make ; at which remark Baisemeaux stamped on the ground."

"Well, well," said D'Artagnan, "I will run up your account for you : you were captain of M. Mazarin's guards ; and 12,000 francs a year would in twelve years amount to 140,000 francs."

"twelve thousand francs ! Are you mad ?" cried Baisemeaux ; "the miser gave me no more than 6,000, and the expenses of the post added to 6,500. M. Colbert, who deducted the other 6,000 francs, condescended to allow me to take fifty pistoles as a gratification ; so that, if it were not for my little estate at Montlezun, which brings me in 12,000 francs a year, I could not have met my engagements."

"Well, then, how about the 50,000 francs from the Bastille ? There, I suppose you are boarded and lodged, and get your 6,000 francs salary besides."—"Admitted !"

"Whether the year be good or bad, there are fifty prisoners, who, on an average, bring you in a thousand francs a year each."—"I don't deny it."

"Well, there is at once an income of 50,000 francs ; you have held the post three years, and must have received in that time 150,000 francs."

"You forget one circumstance, dear M. d'Artagnan."

"What is that ?"

"That while you received your appointment as captain from the king himself, I received mine as governor from Messrs. Tremblay and Louvière."—"Quite right, and Tremblay was not a man to let you have the post for nothing."

"Nor was Louvière either ; the result was that I gave 75,000 francs to Tremblay as his share."

"Very agreeable that ! and to Louvière ?"—"The same."

"Money down ?"

"No ; that would have been impossible. The king did not wish, nor M. Mazarin did not wish, to have the appearance of removing two gentlemen, who had sprung from the barricades ; he permitted me therefore, to make certain extravagant conditions for their retirement."

"What were those conditions ?"

"Tremblay . . . three years' income for the good will."

"The deuce ! so that the 150,000 francs have passed into their hands."

"Precisely so."

"And beyond that ?"

"A sum of 150,000 francs, or 15,000 pistoles, whichever you please, in annual payments."

"Exorbitant enough."—"Yes, but that is not all."

"What besides ?"

"In default of the fulfilment by me of any one of those conditions, those gentlemen enter upon their functions again. The king has been induced to sign that."

"It is enormous, incredible !"—"Such is the fact, however."

"I do indeed pity you, Baisemeaux. But why, in the name of fortune, did M. Mazarin grant you this pretended favour ; it would have been far easier to have refused you altogether."

"Certainly, but he was strongly persuaded to do so by my protector."

"Who is he ?"

"One of your own friends, indeed ; M. d'Herblay."

"M. d'Herblay ! Aramis !"

"Just so ; he has been very kind towards me."

"Kind ! to make you enter into such a bargain !"

"Listen ! I wished to leave the cardinal's service. M. d'Herblay spoke on my behalf to Louvière and Tremblay—they objected ; I wished to decline the appointment very much, for I knew what it could be made to

produce ; in my distress I confided in M. d'Herblay, and he offered to come my surety for the different payments."

"You astound me ! Aramis become your surety?"

"Like a man of honour ; he procured the signature ; Tremblay and Louvière resigned their appointments ; I have paid every year 25,000 francs to these two gentlemen ; on the 31st of May, every year, M. d'Herblay himself comes to the Bastille, and brings me 5,000 pistoles to distribute between my crocodiles."

"You owe Aramis 150,000 francs, then?"

"That is the very thing which is the cause of my despair, for I owe him 100,000."—"I don't quite understand you."

"He has been only two years. To day, however, is the 31st of May, and he has not been yet, and to-morrow, at mid-day, the payment falls due ; if, therefore, I don't pay to-morrow, those gentlemen can, by the terms of the contract, break off the bargain ; I shall be stripped of everything I shall have worked for three years, and given 250,000 francs for nothing absolutely for nothing at all, dear M. d'Artagnan."

"This is very strange," murmured D'Artagnan.

"You can now imagine that I may well have wrinkles on my forehead, can you not?"—"Yes, indeed !"

"And you can imagine, too, that notwithstanding I may be as round as a cheese, with a complexion like an apple, and my eyes like coals on fire, I may almost be afraid that I shall not have a cheese or an apple left to eat, and that I shall only have my eyes left me to weep with."

"It is really a very grievous affair."

"I have come to you, M. d'Artagnan, for you are the only one who can get me out of my trouble."—"In what way?"

"You are acquainted with the Abbé d'Herblay, and you know that he is somewhat mysterious."—"Yes."

"Well, you can, perhaps, give me the address of his presbytery, for he has been to Noisy-le-Sec, and he is no longer there."

"I should think not, indeed. He is Bishop of Vannes."

"What ! Vannes in Bretagne?"—"Yes."

The little man began to tear his hair, saying, "How can I get to Vannes from here by midday to-morrow ? I am a lost man."

"Your despair quite distresses me."

"Vannes, Vannes," cried Baisemeaux.

"But, listen ; a bishop is not always a resident. M. d'Herblay may not possibly be so far away as you fear."

"Pray tell me his address."—"I really don't know it."

"In that case, I am utterly lost. I will go and throw myself at the king's feet."

"But, Baisemeaux, I can hardly believe what you tell me ; besides, the Bastille is capable of producing 50,000 francs a year, why have you not tried to screw 100,000 out of it?"

"Because I am an honest man, M. d'Artagnan, and because my creditors are fed like potentates."

"Well, you are in a fair way to get out of your difficulties ; give yourself a good attack of indigestion with your excellent living, and put yourself out of the way between this and midday to-morrow."

"How can you be hard-hearted enough to laugh?"

"Nay, you really afflict me. Come, Baisemeaux, if you can pledge your word of honour, do so, that you will not open your lips to any man about what I am going to say to you."

Never, never!"

You wish to put your hand on Aramis?"—"At any cost."

Well, go and see where M. Fouquet is."

Why, what connection can there be——"

How stupid you are. Don't you know that Vannes is in the diocese of Belle-Isle, or Belle-Isle in the diocese of Vannes? Belle-Isle belongs to M. Fouquet, and M. Fouquet nominated M. d'Herblay to that bishopric?"

I see, I see; you restore me to life again."

So much the better. Go and tell M. Fouquet very simply that you wish to speak to M. d'Herblay."

Of course, of course," exclaimed Baisemeaux, delightedly.

But," said D'Artagnan, checking him by a severe look, "your word of honour?"

I give you my sacred word of honour," replied the little man, about to start off running.

Where are you going?"—"To M. Fouquet's house."

It is useless doing that; M. Fouquet is playing at cards with the king. All you can do is to pay M. Fouquet a visit early to-morrow morning."

I will do so. Thank you."

Good luck attend you," said D'Artagnan.—"Thank you."

"This is a strange affair," murmured D'Artagnan, as he slowly descended the staircase after he had left Baisemeaux. "What possible interest can Aramis have in obliging Baisemeaux in this manner? Well, suppose we shall learn some day or another."

## CHAPTER XCVII.

### THE KING'S CARD-TABLE.

M. FOUQUET was present, as D'Artagnan had said, at the king's card-table. It seemed as if Buckingham's departure had shed a balm upon all the agitated hearts of the previous evening. Monsieur, radiant with delight, made a thousand affectionate signs to his mother. The Count de Guiche could not separate himself from Buckingham, and while playing, conversed with him upon the circumstances of his projected voyage. Buckingham, thoughtful, and kind in his manner, like a man who has adopted a resolution, listened to the count, and from time to time cast a look full of regret and hopeless affliction at Madame. The princess, in the midst of her elation of spirits, divided her attention between the king, who was playing with her, Monsieur, who quietly joked her about her enormous winnings, and De Guiche, who exhibited an extravagant delight. Of Buckingham she took but little notice, for her, this fugitive, this exile, was now simply a remembrance, and no longer a man. Light hearts are thus constituted; while they themselves continue untouched, they roughly break with every one who may possibly interfere with their little calculation of selfish comforts. Madame had received Buckingham's smiles and attentions and sighs, while he was present; but what was the good of sighing, smiling, and kneeling at a distance? Can one tell in what direction the winds in the Channel, which toss the mighty vessels to and fro, carry such sighs as these? The duke could not conceal this change, and his heart was cruelly hurt at it. Of a sensitive character, proud, and susceptible of deep attachment, he cursed the day on which the passion had entered his heart. The looks which he cast, from time to time, at Madame, became colder by degrees at the chilling complexion of his thoughts. He could hardly yet

despair, but he was strong enough to impose silence upon the tumultuous outcries of his heart. In exact proportion, however, as Madame suspected this change of feeling, she redoubled her activity to regain the ray of light which she was about to lose ; her timid and indecisive mind was first displayed in brilliant flashes of wit and humour. At any cost, she felt that she must be remarked above everything and every one, even above the king himself. And she was so, for the queens, notwithstanding their dignity, and the king, despite the respect which etiquette required, were all eclipsed by her. The queens, stately and ceremonious, were softened and could not restrain their laughter. Madame Henrietta, the queen's mother, was dazzled by the brilliancy which cast distinction upon her family, thanks to the wit of the grand-daughter of Henry IV. The king, so jealous, as a young man and as a monarch, of the superiority of those who surrounded him, could not resist admitting himself vanquished by that petulance so thoroughly French in its nature, and whose energy was more than ever increased by its English humour. Like a child, he was captivated by her radiant beauty, which her wit made still more so. Madame's eyes flashed like lightning. Wit and humour escaped from her ruby lips like persuasion from the lips of Nestor of old. The whole court, subdued by her enchanting grace, noticed, for the first time, that laughter could be indulged in before the greatest monarch in the world, like people who merited their appellation of the wittiest and most polished people in the world.

Madame, from that evening, achieved and enjoyed a success capable of bewildering whomsoever it might be, who had not been born in those elevated regions termed a throne, and which, in spite of their elevation, are sheltered from similar vertigoes. From that very moment Louis XIV. acknowledged Madame as a person who might be recognised. Buckingham regarded her as a *coquette* deserving the cruellest tortures, and De Guiche looked upon her as a divinity ; the courtiers as a star whose light might become the focus of all favour and power. And yet Louis XIV., a few years previously, had not even condescended to offer his hand to that "ugly girl" for a ballet ; and yet Buckingham had worshipped this *coquette* in the humblest attitude ; and yet De Guiche had looked upon this divinity as a mere woman ; and yet the courtiers had not dared to extol this star in her upward progress, fearful to displease the monarch whom this star had formerly displeased.

Let us see what was taking place during this memorable evening at the king's card-table. The young queen, although Spanish by birth, and the niece of Anne of Austria, loved the king, and could not conceal her affection. Anne of Austria, a keen observer, like all women, and imperious like every queen, was sensible of Madame's power, and acquiesced in it immediately, a circumstance which induced the young queen to raise the siege and retire to her apartments. The king hardly paid any attention to her departure, notwithstanding the pretended symptoms of indisposition by which it was accompanied. Encouraged by the rules of etiquette which he had begun to introduce at the court, as an element of every position and relation of life, Louis XIV. did not disturb himself ; he offered his hand to Madame without looking at Monsieur his brother, and led the young princess to the door of her apartments. It was remarked, that at the threshold of the door, his majesty, freed from every restraint, or less strong than the situation, sighed very deeply. The ladies present—nothing escapes a woman's observation—Mademoiselle Montalais for instance—did not fail to say to each other, "the king sighed," and "Madame

sighed too." This had been indeed the case. Madame had sighed very noiselessly, but with an accompaniment very far more dangerous for the king's repose. Madame had sighed, first closing her beautiful black eyes, next opening them, and then, laden as they were, with an indescribable mournfulness of expression, she had raised them towards the king, whose face at that moment had visibly heightened in colour. The consequence of these blushes, of these interchanged sighs, and of this royal agitation, was, that Montalais had committed an indiscretion, which had certainly affected her companion, for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, less clear-sighted perhaps, turned pale when the king blushed; and her attendance being required upon Madame, she tremblingly followed the princess, without thinking of taking the gloves, which court etiquette required her to do. True it is that this young country girl might allege as her excuse the agitation into which the king seemed to be thrown, for Mademoiselle de la Vallière, busily engaged in closing the door, had involuntary fixed her eyes upon the king, who, as he retired backwards, had his face towards it. The king returned to the room where the card-tables were set out. He wished to speak to the different persons there, but it could easily be seen that his mind was absent. He jumbled different accounts together, which as taken advantage of by some of the noblemen who had retained those habits since the time of Monsieur Mazarin, he who had memory, but was a good calculator. In this way, Monsieur Manicamp, with a thoughtless and absent air,—for Monsieur Manicamp was the honestest man in the world, appropriated simply 20,000 francs, which were littering the table, and the ownership of which did not seem legitimately to belong to any person in particular. In the same way, Monsieur de Wardes, whose head was doubtless a little bewildered by the occurrences of the evening, somehow forgot to leave the sixty double louis which he had won for the Duke of Buckingham, and which the Duke, incapable, like his father, of soiling his hands with coin of any sort, had left lying on the table before him. The king only recovered his attention in some degree at the moment that Monsieur Colbert, who had been narrowly observant for some minutes, approached, and, doubtless, with great respect, yet with much perseverance, whispered a counsel of some sort into the still tingling ears of the king. The king, at the suggestion, listened with renewed attention, and immediately looking around him, said, "Is Monsieur Fouquet no longer here?"

"Yes, sire, I am here," replied the surintendant, who was engaged with Buckingham, and approached the king, who advanced a step towards him with a smiling yet negligent air. "Forgive me," said Louis, "if I interrupt our conversation; but I claim your attention wherever I may require your services."

"I am always at the king's service," replied Fouquet.

"And your cash-box, too," said the king, laughing with a false smile.

"My cash-box more than anything else," said Fouquet, coldly.

"The fact is, I wish to give a *fête* at Fontainebleau, to keep open house for fifteen days, and I shall require——" and he stopped, glancing at Colbert. Fouquet waited without showing discomposure; and the king resumed, answering Colbert's cruel smile, "Four millions of francs."

"Four millions," repeated Fouquet, bowing profoundly. And his nails, buried in his bosom, were thrust into his flesh, the tranquil expression of his face remaining unaltered. "When will they be required, sire?"

"Take your time,—I mean—no, no; as soon as possible."

"A certain time will be necessary, sire."

"Time !" exclaimed Colbert, triumphantly.

"The time, monsieur," said the surintendant, with the haughtiest disdain, "simply to count the money ; a million only can be drawn and weighed in a day."

"Four days, then," said Colbert.

"My clerks," replied Fouquet, addressing himself to the king, "will perform wonders for his majesty's service, and the sum shall be ready in three days."

It was for Colbert now to turn pale. Louis looked at him astonished. Fouquet withdrew without any parade or weakness, smiling at his numerous friends, in whose countenances alone he read the sincerity of their friendship—an interest partaking of compassion. Fouquet, however, should not be judged by his smile, for, in reality, he felt as if he had been stricken by death. Drops of blood beneath his coat stained the fine linen which covered his chest. His dress concealed the blood, and his smile the rage which devoured him. His domestics perceived, by the manner in which he approached his carriage, that their master was not in the best of humours ; the result of their discernment was, that his orders were executed with that exactitude of manœuvre which is found on board a man-of-war, commanded during a storm by a passionate captain. The carriage, therefore, did not simply roll along, but flew. Fouquet had hardly had time to recover himself during the drive ; on his arrival he went at once to Aramis, who had not yet retired for the night. As for Porthos, he had supped very agreeably from a roast leg of mutton, two pheasants, and a perfect heap of cray-fish ; he then directed his body to be anointed with perfumed oils, in the manner of the wrestlers of old ; and when the anointment was completed, he was wrapped in flannels and placed in a warm bed. Aramis, as we have already said, had not retired. Seated at his ease in a velvet dressing-gown, he wrote letter after letter in that fine and hurried handwriting, a page of which contained a quarter of a volume. The door was thrown hurriedly open, and the surintendant appeared, pale, agitated, and anxious. Aramis looked up : "Good evening," said he ; and his searching look detected his host's sadness and disordered state of mind. "Was the play good at his majesty's ?" asked Aramis, a way of beginning the conversation.

Fouquet threw himself upon a couch, and then pointed to the door to the servant who had followed him ; when the servant had left he said "Excellent."

Aramis, who had followed every movement with his eyes, noticed that he stretched himself upon the cushions with a sort of feverish impatience.

"You have lost as usual ?" inquired Aramis, his pen still in his hand.

"Better than usual," replied Fouquet.

"You know how to support losses."—"Sometimes."

"What, Monsieur Fouquet a bad player !"

"There is play and play, Monsieur d'Herblay."

"How much have you lost ?" inquired Aramis, with a slight uneasiness.

Fouquet collected himself a moment, and then, without the slightest emotion, said, "The evening has cost me four millions," and a bitter laugh drowned the last vibration of these words.

Aramis, who did not expect such an amount, dropped his pen. "Four millions !" he said ; "you have lost four millions,—impossible !"

"Monsieur Colbert held my cards for me," replied the surintendant with a similar bitter laugh.

"Ah, now I understand ; so, so, a new application for funds ?"

"Yes, and from the king's own lips. It is impossible to destroy a man with a more charming smile. What do you think of it?"

"It is clear that your ruin is the object in view."

"That is still your opinion?"

"Still. Besides, there is nothing in it which should astonish you, for we have foreseen it all along."

"Yes; but I did not expect four millions."

"No doubt the amount is serious; but after all, four millions are not quite the death of a man, especially when the man in question is Monsieur Fouquet."

"My dear D'Herblay, if you knew the contents of my coffers, you would find it less easy."

"And you promised?"—"What could I do?"

"That's true."

"The very day when I refuse, Colbert will procure it; whence I know not, but he will procure the money, and I shall be lost."

"There is no doubt of that. In how many days hence have you promised these four millions?"

"In three days; the king seemed exceedingly pressed."

"In three days?"

"When I think," resumed Fouquet, "that just now, as I passed along the streets, the people cried out, 'There is the rich Monsieur Fouquet,' it was enough to turn my brain."

"Stay, monsieur, the matter is not worth the trouble," said Aramis, calmly, sprinkling some sand over the letter he had just written.

"Suggest a remedy, then, for this evil without a remedy."

"There is only one remedy for you,—pay."

"But it is very uncertain whether I have the money. Everything must be exhausted: Belle-Isle is paid for; the pension has been paid; and the money, since the investigation of the accounts of those who farm the revenue, is rare. Besides, admitting that I pay this time, how can I do so on another occasion? When kings have tasted money, they are like tigers who have tasted flesh, they devour everything. The day will arrive—must arrive—when I shall have to say, 'Impossible, sire,' and on that very day I am a lost man."

Aramis raised his shoulders slightly, saying, "A man in your position, my lord, is only lost when he wishes to be so."

"A man, whatever his position may be, cannot hope to struggle against a king."

"Nonsense; when I was young I struggled successfully with the Cardinal Richelieu, who was king of France,—nay more—cardinal."

"Where are my armies, my troops, my treasures? I have not even Belle-Isle."

"Bah! necessity is the mother of invention, and when you think all is lost, something will be discovered which shall save everything."

"Who will discover this wonderful something?"—"Yourself."

"I! I resign my office of inventor."—"Then I will."

"Be it so. But then, set to work without delay."

"Oh! we have time enough!"

"You kill me, D'Herblay, with your calmness," said the surintendant, passing his handkerchief over his face.

"Do you not remember that I one day told you not to make yourself uneasy, if you possess but courage. Have you any?"

"I believe so."

"Then don't make yourself uneasy."

"It is decided then, that, at the last moment, you will come to my assistance."

"It will only be the repayment of a debt I owe you."

"It is the vocation of financiers to anticipate the wants of men such as yourself, D'Herblay."

"If obligingness is the vocation of financiers, charity is a virtue of the clergy. Only, on this occasion, do you act, monsieur. You are not yet sufficiently reduced, and at the last moment we shall see what is to be done."

"We shall see then in a very short time."

"Very well. However, permit me to tell you that, personally, I regret exceedingly that you are at present so short of money, because I was myself about to ask you for some."

"For yourself?"

"For myself, or some of my people, for mine or for ours."

"How much do you want?"

"Be easy on that score; a roundish sum, it is true, but not too exorbitant."

"Tell me the amount."—"Fifty thousand francs."

"Oh! a mere nothing. Of course one has always 50,000 francs. Why the deuce cannot that knave Colbert be as easily satisfied as you are; and I should give myself far less trouble than I do. When do you need this sum?"

"To-morrow morning; but you require to know its destination."

"Nay, nay, chevalier, I need no explanation."

"To-morrow is the first of June."—"Well?"

"One of our bonds becomes due."

"I did not know we had any bonds."

"Certainly; to-morrow we pay our last third instalment."

"What third?"

"Of the 150,000 to Baisemeaux."—"Baisemeaux—who is he?"

"The governor of the Bastille."

"Yes, I remember; on what grounds am I to pay 150,000 for that man?"

"On account of the appointment which he, or rather we, purchased from Louvière and Tremblay."

"I have a very vague recollection of the whole matter."

"That is likely enough, for you have so many affairs to attend to; however, I do not believe you have any affair of greater importance than this one."

"Tell me, then, why we purchased this appointment."

"Why, in order to render him a service, in the first place, and afterwards ourselves."

"Ourselves? You are joking."

"Monseigneur, the time may come when the governor of the Bastille may prove a very excellent acquaintance."

"I have not the good fortune to understand you, D'Herblay."

"Monseigneur, we have our own poets, our own engineer, our own architect, our own musicians, our own printer, and our own painters; we needed our own governor of the Bastille."

"Do you think so?"

"Let us not deceive ourselves, monseigneur; we are very much exposed to paying the Bastille a visit," added the prelate, displaying, beneath his pale lips, teeth which were still the same beautiful teeth so admired thirty years previously by Marie Michon.

"And you think it is not too much to pay 150,000 for that? I assure you that you generally put out your money at better interest than that."

"The day will come when you will admit your mistake."

"My dear D'Herblay, the very day on which a man enters the Bastille, he is no longer protected by the past."

"Yes, he is, if the bonds are perfectly regular; besides, that good fellow Baisemeaux has not a courtier's heart. I am certain, my lord, that he will not remain ungrateful for that money, without taking into account, I repeat, that I retain the acknowledgments."

"It is a strange affair, usury in a matter of benevolence!"

"Do not mix yourself up with it, monseigneur; if there be usury, it is I who practise it, and both of us reap the advantage from it—that is all."

"Some intrigue, D'Herblay?"—"I do not deny it."

"And Baisemeaux an accomplice in it?"

"Why not? there are worse accomplices than he. May I depend, then, upon the 5,000 pistoles to-morrow?"

"Do you want them this evening?"

"It would be better, for I wish to start early; poor Baisemeaux will not be able to imagine what has become of me, and must be upon thorns."

"You shall have the amount in an hour. Ah, D'Herblay, the interest of your 150,000 francs will never pay my four millions for me!"

"Why not, monseigneur?"

"Good-night; I have business to transact with my clerks before I retire."

"A good night's rest, monseigneur."

"D'Herblay, you wish that which is impossible."

"Shall I have my 50,000 francs this evening?"—"Yes."

"Go to sleep, then, in perfect safety; it is I who tell you to do so."

Notwithstanding this assurance, and the tone in which it was given, Fouquet left the room shaking his head, and heaving a sigh.

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## CHAPTER XCVIII.

### M. BAISEMEAUX DE MONTLEZUN'S ACCOUNTS.

THE clock of St. Paul's was striking seven as Aramis, on horseback, dressed as a simple citizen—that is to say, in a coloured suit, with no distinctive mark about him, except a kind of hunting-knife by his side—passed before the Street du Petit-Musc, and stopped opposite the Street des Tourelles, at the gate of the Bastille. Two sentinels were on duty at the gate; they raised no difficulty about admitting Aramis, who entered without dismounting, and they pointed out the way he was to go by a long passage with buildings on both sides. This passage led to the drawbridge, or, in other words, to the real entrance. The drawbridge was down, and the duty of the day was about being entered upon. The sentinel on duty at the outer guard-house stopped Aramis's further progress, asking him, in a rough tone of voice, what had brought him there. Aramis explained, with his usual politeness, that a wish to speak to M. Baisemeaux de Montlezun had occasioned his visit. The first sentinel then summoned a second sentinel, stationed within an inner lodge, who showed his face at the grating, and inspected the new arrival very attentively. Aramis reiterated the expression of his wish to see the governor, whereupon the sentinel called to an officer of lower grade, who was walking about in a tolerably spacious courtyard, and who, in his turn, on being informed of his object, ran to seek one of the officers of the governor's staff. The latter, after

having listened to Aramis's request, begged him to wait a moment, then went away a short distance, but returned to ask his name. "I cannot tell it you, monsieur," said Aramis; "I would only mention that I have matters of such importance to communicate to the governor, that I can only rely beforehand upon one thing, that M. de Baisemeaux will be delighted to see me; nay, more than that, when you shall have told him that it is the person whom he expected on the 1st of June, I am convinced he will hasten here himself." The officer could not possibly believe that a man of the governor's importance should put himself out for a man of so little importance as the citizen-looking person on horseback. "It happens most fortunately, monsieur," he said, "that the governor is just going out, and you can perceive his carriage, with the horses already harnessed, in the courtyard yonder; there will be no occasion for him to come to meet you, as he will see you as he passes by." Aramis bowed to signify his assent; he did not wish to inspire others with too exalted an opinion of himself, and therefore waited patiently and in silence, leaning upon the saddle-bow of his horse. Ten minutes had hardly elapsed when the governor's carriage was observed to move. The governor appeared at the door, got into the carriage, which immediately prepared to start. The same ceremony was observed for the governor himself as had been the case with a suspected stranger: the sentinel at the lodge advanced as the carriage was about to pass under the arch, and the governor opened the carriage-door, himself setting the example of obedience to orders; so that, in this way, the sentinel could convince himself that no one quitted the Bastille improperly. The carriage rolled along under the archway, but, at the moment the iron gate was opened, the officer approached the carriage, which had been again stopped, and said something to the governor, who immediately put his head out of the doorway, and perceived Aramis on horseback at the end of the drawbridge. He immediately uttered almost a shout of delight, and got out, or rather darted out, of his carriage, running towards Aramis, whose hands he seized, making a thousand apologies. He almost kissed him. "What a difficult matter to enter the Bastille!" said Aramis. "Is it the same for those who are sent here against their wills, as for those who come of their own accord?"

"A thousand pardons, my lord. How delighted I am to see your grace."

"Hush! What are you thinking of, my dear M. Baisemeaux, what do you suppose would be thought of a bishop in my present costume?"

"Pray excuse me, I had forgotten. Take this gentleman's horse to the stables," cried Baisemeaux.

"No, no," said Aramis, "I have 5,000 pistoles in the portmanteau."

The governor's countenance became so radiant, that if the prisoners had seen him, they would have imagined some prince of the blood royal had arrived. "Yes, you are right, the horse shall be taken to the government house. Will you get into the carriage, my dear M. d'Herblay, and it shall take us back to my house."

"Get into a carriage to cross a courtyard! do you believe I am so great an invalid? No, no, we will go on foot."

Baisemeaux then offered his arm as a support, but the prelate did not accept it. They arrived in this manner at the government house, Baisemeaux rubbing his hands and glancing at the horse from time to time, while Aramis was looking at the black and bare walls. A tolerably handsome vestibule, a straight staircase of white stone, led to the governor's apartments, who crossed the antechamber, the dining-room, where breakfast was being prepared, opened a small side door, and closeted himself

with his guest in a large cabinet, the windows of which opened obliquely upon the courtyard and the stables. Baisemeaux installed the prelate with that obsequious politeness of which a good man or a grateful man, alone possesses the secret. An armchair, a footstool, a small table beside him, in which to rest his hand, everything was prepared by the governor himself. With his own hands, too, he placed upon the table, with an almost religious solicitude, the bag containing the gold, which one of the soldiers had brought up with the most respectful devotion; and the soldier having left the room, Baisemeaux himself closed the door after him, drew aside one of the window-curtains, and looked steadfastly at Aramis to see if the prelate required anything further. "Well, my lord," he said, still standing up, "Of all men of their word, you still continue to be the most punctual."

"In matters of business, dear M. de Baisemeaux, exactitude is not a virtue only, but a duty as well."

"Yes, in matters of business, certainly; but what you have with me is not of that character, it is a service you are rendering me."

"Come, confess, dear M. de Baisemeaux, that, notwithstanding this exactitude, you have not been without a little uneasiness."

"About your health, I certainly have," stammered out Baisemeaux.

"I wished to come here yesterday, but I was not able, as I was too fatigued," continued Aramis. Baisemeaux anxiously slipped another cushion behind his guest's back. "But," continued Aramis, "I promised myself to come and pay you a visit to-day, early in the morning."

"You are really very kind, my lord. And it was a good thing for me that I was punctual, I think."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, you were going out." At which latter remark Baisemeaux coloured and said, "Yes, it is true I was going out."

"Then I prevent you," said Aramis; whereupon the embarrassment of Baisemeaux became visibly greater. "I am putting you to inconvenience," he continued, fixing a keen glance upon the poor governor; "if I had known that, I should not have come."

"How can your lordship imagine that you could ever inconvenience me?"

"Confess you were going in search of money."

"No," stammered out Baisemeaux, "no! I assure you I was going

Does the governor still intend to go to M. Fouquet," suddenly called out the major from below. Baisemeaux ran to the window like a madman. "No, no," he exclaimed in a state of desperation, "who the deuce is speaking of M. Fouquet? are you drunk below there; why am I interrupted when I am engaged on business?"

"You were going to M. Fouquet's," said Aramis, biting his lips, "to M. Fouquet, the abbé, or the surintendant?"

Baisemeaux almost made up his mind to tell an untruth, but he could not summon courage to do so. "To the surintendant," he said.

"It is true, then, that you were in want of money, since you were going to the person who gives it away?"

"I assure you, my lord——" "You are suspicious of me."

"My dear lord, it was the uncertainty and ignorance in which I was as to where you were to be found."

"You would have found the money you require at M. Fouquet's, for he is a man whose hand is always open."

"I swear that I should never have ventured to ask M. Fouquet for money. I only wished to ask him for your address."

"To ask M. Fouquet for my address?" exclaimed Aramis, opening his eyes in real astonishment.

"Yes," said Baisemeaux, greatly disturbed by the glance which the prelate fixed upon him, "at M. Fouquet's, certainly."

"There is no harm in that, dear M. Baisemeaux, only I would ask, why ask my address of M. Fouquet?"

"That I might write to you."

"I understand," said Aramis, smiling, "but that is not what I meant; I do not ask you what you required my address for, I only ask why you should go to M. Fouquet for it?"

"Oh!" said Baisemeaux, "as Belle-Isle is the property of M. Fouquet, and as Belle-Isle is in the diocese of Vannes, and as you are bishop of Vannes——"

"But, my dear Baisemeaux, since you knew I was bishop of Vannes, you had no occasion to ask M. Fouquet for my address."

"Well, monsieur," said Baisemeaux, completely at bay, "if I have acted indiscreetly, I beg your pardon most sincerely."

"Nonsense," observed Aramis, calmly; "how can you possibly have acted indiscreetly?" And while he composed his face, and continued to smile cheerfully on the governor, he was considering how Baisemeaux, who was not aware of his address, knew, however, that Vannes was his residence. "I will clear all this up," he said to himself: and then speaking aloud, added, "Well, my dear governor, shall we now arrange our little accounts?"

"I am at your orders, my lord; but tell me beforehand, my lord, whether you will do me the honour to breakfast with me as usual?"

"Very willingly indeed."

"That's well," said Baisemeaux, as he struck the bell before him three times.

"What does that mean?" inquired Aramis.

"That I have some one to breakfast with me, and that preparations are to be made accordingly."

"And you rang thrice. Really, my dear governor, I begin to think you are acting ceremoniously with me."

"No, indeed. Besides, the least I can do is to receive you in the best way I can."

"But why so?"

"Because not a prince, even, could have done what you have done for me."

"Nonsense, nonsense!"—"Nay, I assure you——"

"Let us speak of other matters," said Aramis. "Or rather, tell me how your affairs here are getting on?"

"Not over well."—"The deuce!"

"M. de Mazarin was not hard enough."

"Yes, I see; you require a government full of suspicion—like that of the old cardinal, for instance."

"Yes; matters went on better under him. The brother of his 'grey eminence' made his fortune in it."

"Believe me, my dear governor," said Aramis, drawing closer to Baisemeaux, "a young king is well worth an old cardinal. Youth has its suspicions, its fits of anger, its prejudices, as old age has its hatreds, its precautions, and its fears. Have you paid your three years' profits to Louvière and to Tremblay?"

"Most certainly I have."

"So that you have nothing more to give them than the fifty thousand francs which I have brought with me?"—"Yes."

"Have you not saved anything, then?"

"My lord, in giving the fifty thousand francs of my own to these gentlemen, I assure you that I give them everything I gain. I told M. d'Arnan so yesterday evening."

"Ah!" said Aramis, whose eyes sparkled for a moment, but became immediately afterwards as unmoved as before; "so you have seen my old friend D'Artagnan; how was he?"

"Wonderfully well."

"And what did you say to him, M. de Baisemeaux?"

"I told him," continued the governor, not perceiving his own thoughtlessness; "I told him that I fed my prisoners too well."

"How many have you?" inquired Aramis, in an indifferent tone of voice.—"Sixty."

"Well, that is a tolerably round number."

"In former years, my lord, there were, during certain years, as many as two hundred."

"Still a minimum of sixty is not to be grumbled at."

"Perhaps not; for, to anybody but myself, each prisoner would bring two hundred and fifty pistoles; for instance, for a prince of the blood, five hundred francs a day."

"Only you have no prince of the blood; at least, I suppose so," said Aramis, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"No, thank heaven!—I mean, no, unfortunately."

"What do you mean by unfortunately?"

"Because my appointment would be improved by it. So, fifty francs a day for a prince of the blood, thirty-six for a *maréchal* of France —"

"But you have as many *maréchals* of France, I suppose, as you have princes of the blood?"

"Alas! yes; it is true that lieutenant-generals and brigadiers pay twenty francs, and I have two of them. After that, come the councillors of parliament, who bring me fifteen francs, and I have six of them."

"I did not know," said Aramis, "that councillors were so productive."

"Yes; but from fifteen francs I sink at once to ten francs; namely, for an ordinary judge, or for an ecclesiastic."

"And you have seven, you say: an excellent affair."

"Nay, a bad one, and for this reason. How can I possibly treat these fellows who are of some good, at all events, otherwise than as a councillor of the parliament?"

"Yes, you are right; I do not see five francs' difference between them."

"You understand; if I have a fine fish, I pay four or five francs for it; if I get a fine fowl, it costs me a franc and a half. I fatten a good deal of poultry, but I have to buy grain, and you cannot imagine the multitude of rats which infest this place."

"Why not get half a dozen cats to deal with them?"

"Cats indeed; yes, they eat them, but I was obliged to give up the idea on account of the way in which they treated my grain. I have been obliged to have some terrier dogs sent me from England to kill the rats. The dogs have tremendous appetites; they eat as much as a prisoner of the war, without taking into account the rabbits and fowls they kill." "Is Aramis really listening or not? No one could have told; his down-cast eyes showed the attentive man, but the restless hand betrayed that he was absorbed in thought—Aramis was meditating. "I was saying," con-

tinued Baisemeaux, "that a tolerable-sized fowl costs me a franc and half, and that a good-sized fish costs me four or five francs. Three meals are served at the Bastille, and, as the prisoners, having nothing to do, are always eating, a ten-franc man costs me seven francs and a half."

"But did you not say that you treated those at ten francs like those at fifteen?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Very well! Then you gain seven francs and a half upon those who pay you fifteen francs."

"I must compensate myself somehow," said Baisemeaux, who saw how he had been caught.

"You are quite right, my dear governor; but have you no prisoners below ten francs?"

"Oh, yes! we have citizens and barristers taxed at five francs."

"And do they eat too?"

"Not a doubt about it; only you understand they do not get fish or poultry, nor rich wines at every meal; but at all events thrice a week they have a good dish at their dinner."

"Really, you are quite a philanthropist, my dear governor, and you will ruin yourself."

"No; understand me; when the fifteen francs has not eaten his fowl or the ten francs has left his dish unfinished, I send it to the five-franc prisoner; it is a feast for the poor devil, and one must be charitable, you know."

"And what do you make out of your five-franc prisoners?"

"A franc and a half."

"Baisemeaux, you're an honest fellow; in honest truth I say so."

"Thank you, my lord. But I feel most for the small tradesmen and bailiffs' clerks, who are rated at three francs. Those do not often see a Rhine carp or Channel sturgeon."

"But do not the five-franc gentlemen sometimes leave some scraps?"

"Oh: my lord, do not believe I am so stingy as that: I delight to see the heart of some poor little tradesman or clerk by sending him a wing of red partridge, a slice of venison, or a slice of a truffled pasty, dishes which he never tasted except in his dreams; these are the leavings of the twenty-four-franc prisoners; and he eats and drinks, at dessert he cries 'Long live the king,' and blesses the Bastille; with a couple of bottles of champagne, which cost me five sous, I make him tipsy every Sunday. The whole class of people call down blessings upon me, and are sorry to leave the prison. Do you know that I have remarked, and it does me infinite honour, that certain prisoners, who have been set at liberty, have, almost immediately afterwards, got imprisoned again? Why should this be the case, unless it be to enjoy the pleasures of my kitchen? It is really true." Aramis smiled with an expression of incredulity.

"You smile," said Baisemeaux.—"I do," returned Aramis.

"I tell you that we have names which have been inscribed on our books thrice in the space of two years."

"I must see it before I believe it," said Aramis.

"Well, I can show it you, although it is prohibited to communicate the registers to strangers; and if you really wish to see it with your own eyes——"

"I should be delighted, I confess."

"Very well," said Baisemeaux, and he took out of a cupboard a large register. Aramis followed him most anxiously with his eyes, and Bai

Aramis returned, placed the register upon the table, turned over the leaves a minute, and stayed at the letter M.

"Look here," said he, "Martinier, January, 1659; Martinier, June, 1660; Martinier, March, 1661. Mazarinades, &c.; you understand it was only a pretext; people were not sent to the Bastille for jokes against M. Mazarin; Mazarin denounced himself in order to get imprisoned here."

"And what was his object?"

"None other than to return to my kitchen at three francs the head."

"Three francs—poor devil!"

"The poet, my lord, belongs to the lowest scale, the same style of board as the small tradesman and bailiff's clerk; but I repeat it is to these only that I give those little surprises."

Aramis mechanically turned over the leaves of the register, continuing to read the names, but without appearing to take any interest in the names he read.

"In 1661 you perceive," said Baisemeaux, "eighty entries; and in 1659, fifty also."

"Ah!" said Aramis. "Seldon; I seem to know that name. Was it you who spoke to me about a certain young man?"

"Yes, a poor devil of a student, who made—What do you call that name?—two Latin verses rhyme together?"

"A distich."—"Yes; that is it."

"Poor fellow; for a distich."

"Do you not know that he made this distich against the Jesuits?"

"That makes no difference: the punishment seems very severe."

"Do not pity him; last year you seemed to interest yourself in him."

"Yes, I did so."

"Well, as your interest is all-powerful here, my lord, I have treated him at that time as a prisoner at fifteen francs."

"The same as this one, then," said Aramis, who had continued turning over the leaves, and who had stopped at one of the names which followed Martinier.—"Yes, the same as that one."

"Is that Marchiali an Italian?" said Aramis, pointing with his finger to the name which had attracted his attention.—"Hush!" said Baisemeaux.

"Why hush?" said Aramis, involuntarily clenching his white hand.

"I thought I had already spoken to you about that Marchiali."

"No; it is the first time I ever heard his name pronounced."

"That may be; but I may have spoken to you about him without naming him."

"Is he an old offender?" asked Aramis, attempting to smile.

"On the contrary, he is quite young."

"Is his crime, then, very heinous?"—"Unpardonable."

"Has he assassinated any one?"—"Bah!"

"An incendiary, then?"—"Bah!"

"Has he slandered any one?"

"No, no! It is he who—" and Baisemeaux approached Aramis's ear, holding a sort of ear-trumpet of his hands, and whispered, "It is he who seems to resemble the—"

"Yes, yes," said Aramis, "I now remember you already spoke about it a year to me; but the crime appeared to me so slight."

"Slight, do you say?"—"Or rather, so involuntary."

"My lord, it is not involuntarily that such a resemblance is detected."

"Well, the fact is, I had forgotten it. But, my dear host," said Aramis, turning to the register, "if I am not mistaken, we are summoned."

Baisemeaux took the register, hastily restored it to its place in the close which he closed, and put the key in his pocket. "Will it be agreeable to your lordship to breakfast now?" said he; "for you are right in supposing that breakfast was announced."

"Assuredly, my dear governor," and they passed into the dining-room

## CHAPTER XCIX.

### THE BREAKFAST OF MONSIEUR DE BAISEMEAUX.

ARAMIS was generally temperate; but, on this occasion, while taking every care with regard to himself, he did ample justice to Baisemeaux's breakfast, which, in every respect, was most excellent. The latter, on his side, was animated with the wildest gaiety; the sight of the thousand pistoles, which he glanced at from time to time, seemed to open his heart. Every now and then he looked at Aramis with an expression of the deepest gratitude; while the latter, leaning back in his chair, sipped a few drops of wine from his glass, with the air of a connoisseur. "Let me never hear an ill word against the fare of the Bastille," said he, half-closing his eyes; "happy are the prisoners who can get only half a bottle of Burgundy every day."

"All those at fifteen francs drink it," said Baisemeaux. "It is very Volnay."

"Does that poor student, Seldon, drink such good wine?"

"Oh, no!"

"I thought I heard you say he was boarded at fifteen francs."

"He; no, indeed; a man who makes districts—distichs I mean—at fifteen francs. No, no! it is his neighbour who is at fifteen francs."

"Which neighbour?"—"The other, the second Bertaudière."

"Excuse me, my dear governor; but you speak a language which requires an apprenticeship to understand."

"Very true," said the governor. "Allow me to explain:—the second Bertaudière is the person who occupies the second floor of the tower of the Bertaudière."

"So that Bertaudière is the name of one of the towers of the Bastille. The fact is, I think I recollect hearing that each tower has a name of its own. Whereabouts is the one you are speaking of?"

"Look," said Baisemeaux, going to the window. "It is that tower to the left—the second one."

"Is the prisoner at fifteen francs there?"—"Yes."

"Since when?"—"Seven or eight years, nearly."

"What do you mean by nearly? Do you not know the dates more precisely?"

"It was not in my time, dear M. d'Herblay."

"But I should have thought that Louvière or Tremblay would have told you."

"The secrets of the Bastille are never handed over with the keys of the governorship of it."

"Indeed! Then the cause of his imprisonment is a mystery—a state secret."

"Oh, no! I do not suppose it is a state secret, but a secret like everything else that happens at the Bastille."

"But," said Aramis, "why do you speak more freely of Seldon than of the second Bertaudière?"

"Because, in my opinion, the crime of the man who writes a distich is not so great as that of the man who resembles——"

"Yes, yes ; I understand you. Still, do not the turnkeys talk with your prisoners ?"—"Of course."

"The prisoners, I suppose, tell them they are not guilty ?"

"They are always telling them that ; it is a matter of course ; the same thing over and over again."

"But does not the resemblance you were speaking about just now strike the turnkeys ?"

"My dear M. d'Herblay, it is only for men attached to the court, as you are, to take any trouble about such matters."

"You're right, you're right, my dear M. Baisemeaux. Let me give you another taste of this Volnay."

"Not a taste merely, a full glass ; fill yours, too."

"Nay, nay ! You are a musketeer still, to the very tips of your fingers, while I have become a bishop. A taste for me ; a glass for yourself."

"As you please." And Aramis and the governor nodded to each other, they drank their wine. "But," said Aramis, looking with fixed attention at the ruby-coloured wine he had raised to the level of his eyes, as if he wished to enjoy it with all his senses at the same moment, "but you might call a resemblance, another would not, perhaps, take any of it."

"Most certainly he would, though, if it were any one who knew the man he resembles."

"I really think, dear M. de Baisemeaux, that it can be nothing more than a resemblance of your own creation."

"Upon my honour, it is not so."

"Stay," continued Aramis. "I have seen many persons very like the one we are speaking of ; but, out of respect, no one ever said anything about it,"

"Very likely ; because there is resemblance and resemblance. This is a striking one, and if you were to see him, you would admit it to be so."

"If I were to see him, indeed," said Aramis, in an indifferent tone ; "but all probability I never shall."

"Why not ?"

"Because if I were even to put my foot inside one of those horrible dungeons, I should fancy I was buried there for ever."

"No, no ; the cells are very good as places to live in."

"I really do not, and cannot, believe it, and that is a fact."

"Pray do not speak ill of the second Bertaudière. It is really a good room, very nicely furnished and carpeted. The young fellow has by no means been unhappy there ; the best lodging the Bastille affords has been his. There is a chance for you."

"Nay, nay," said Aramis, coldly ; "you will never make me believe there are any good rooms in the Bastille ; and, as for your carpets, they exist only in your imagination. I should find nothing but spiders, rats, and perhaps toads, too."

"Toads ?" said Baisemeaux.—"Yes, in the dungeons."

"Ah ! I don't say there are not toads in the dungeons," replied Baisemeaux. "But—will you be convinced by your own eyes ?" he continued with sudden impulse.

"No, certainly not."

"Not even to satisfy yourself of the resemblance which you deny, as you do the carpets ?"

"Some spectral-looking person, a mere shadow; an unhappy, dying man."

"Nothing of the kind—as brisk and vigorous a young fellow as ever lived."

"Melancholy and ill-tempered, then?"

"Not at all; very gay and lively."

"Nonsense; you are joking."

"Will you follow me?" said Baisemeaux.

"What for?"—"To go the round of the Bastille."

"Why?"—"You will then see for yourself—see with **your eyes.**"

"But the regulations?"

"Never mind them. To-day my major has leave of absence; the lieutenant is visiting the posts on the bastions; we are masters of the position."

"No, no, my dear governor; why, the very idea of the sound of the bolts makes me shudder. You will only have to forget me in the second or fourth Bertaudière, and then——"

"You are refusing an opportunity that may never present itself again. Do you know that, to obtain the favour I propose to you gratis, some of the princes of the blood have offered me as much as fifty thousand francs."

"Really! he must be worth seeing, then?"

"Forbidden fruit, my lord; forbidden fruit. You who belong to the church ought to know that."

"Well, if I had any curiosity, it would be to see the poor author distich."

"Very well, we will see him too; but if I were at all curious, it would be about the beautiful carpeted room and its lodger."

"Furniture is very commonplace; and a face with no expression offers little or no interest."

"But a boarder at fifteen francs is always interesting."

"By the bye, I forgot to ask you about that. Why fifteen francs for him, and only three francs for poor Seldon?"

"The distinction made in that instance was a truly noble act, and one which displayed the king's goodness of heart to great advantage."

"The king's, you say?"

"The cardinal's, I mean; 'this unhappy man,' said M. Mazarin, 'is destined to remain in prison for ever.'"

"Why so?"

"Why it seems that his crime is a lasting one; and, consequently, his punishment ought to be so too."

"Lasting?"

"No doubt of it; unless he is fortunate enough to catch the small-pox, and even that is difficult, for we never get any impure air here."

"Nothing can be more ingenious than your train of reasoning, my dear M. de Baisemeaux. Do you, however, mean to say that this unfortunate man must suffer without interruption or termination?"

"I did not say he was to suffer, my lord; a fifteen-franc boarder does not suffer."

"He suffers imprisonment, at all events."

"No doubt, there is no help for it; but this suffering is sweetened for him. You must admit that this young fellow was not born to eat all the good things he does eat; for instance, such things as we have on the table now; this pasty that has not been touched, these crawfish from the river Marne, of which we have hardly taken any, and which are almost as large as lobsters; all these things will at once be taken to the second Bertaudière, with a bottle of that Volnay which you think so excellent. As you have seen it, you will believe it, I hope."

Yes, my dear governor, certainly ; but all this time you are thinking of your very happy fifteen-francs prisoner, and you forget poor Seldon, *protégé*."

Well, out of consideration for you, it shall be a gala day for him ; he will have some biscuits and preserves with this small bottle of port."

You are a good-hearted fellow ; I have said so already, and I repeat my dear Baisemeaux."

Well, let us set off, then," said the governor, a little bewildered, partly from the wine he had drunk, and partly from Aramis's praises.

Do not forget that I only go to oblige you," said the prelate.

Very well ; but you will thank me when you get there."

'Let us go, then."

'Wait until I have summoned the gaoler," said Baisemeaux, as he struck the bell twice ; at which summons a man appeared. "I am going to visit the towers," said the governor. "No guards, no drums, no noise at all."

"If I were not to leave my cloak here," said Aramis, pretending to be alarmed, "I should really think I was going to prison on my own account." The gaoler preceded the governor, Aramis walking on his right hand ; the line of the soldiers who happened to be in the courtyard drew themselves up in line, as stiff as posts, as the governor passed along. Baisemeaux led the way down several steps which conducted to a sort of esplanade ; thence they arrived at the drawbridge, where the sentinels on duty received the governor with the proper honours. The governor turned towards Aramis, and, speaking in such a tone that the sentinels could not hear a word he said, observed—"I hope you have a good memory, monsieur ?"

"Why ?" inquired Aramis.

"On account of your plans and your measurements, for you know that no one is allowed, not architects even, to enter where the prisoners are, without paper, pens, or pencil."

"Good," said Aramis to himself, "it seems I am an architect, then ? It sounds like one of D'Artagnan's jokes, who saw me acting as an engineer at Belle-Isle." Then, he added aloud, "Be easy on that score, monsieur ; in our profession, a mere glance and a good memory are quite sufficient."

Baisemeaux did not change countenance, and the soldiers took Aramis for what he seemed to be. "Very well ; we will first visit la Bertaudière," said Baisemeaux, still intending the sentinels to hear him. Then, turning to the gaoler, he added, "you will take the opportunity of carrying to No. 2, the few dainties I pointed out."

"Dear M. de Baisemeaux," said Aramis, "you are always forgetting No. 3."

"So I am," said the governor ; and, upon that, they began to ascend. The number of bolts, gratings, and locks, for this single courtyard, would have sufficed for the safety of an entire city. Aramis was neither an imaginative nor a sensitive man ; he had been somewhat of a poet in his youth, but his heart was hard and indifferent, as the heart of every man of fifty-five years of age is, who has been frequently and passionately attached to women in his lifetime, or rather who has been passionately loved by them. But when he placed his foot upon the worn stone steps, along which so many unhappy wretches had passed, when he felt himself impregnated, as it were, with the atmosphere of those gloomy dungeons, moistened with tears, there could be but little doubt he was overcome by his feelings, for his head was bowed and his eyes became dim, as he followed Baisemeaux without uttering a syllable.

## CHAPTER C.

## THE SECOND FLOOR OF LA BERTAUDIÈRE.

ON the second flight of stairs, whether from fatigue or emotion, the breathing of the visitor began to fail him, and he leaned against the wall. "Will you begin by this one?" said Baisemeaux; "for since we are going to boot it matters very little whether we ascend from the second to the third storey or descend from the third to the second."

"No, no," exclaimed Aramis, eagerly, "higher, if you please; the one above is the more urgent." They continued their ascent. "Ask the gaoler for the keys?" whispered Aramis. Baisemeaux did so, took the keys, and, himself, opened the door of the third room. The gaoler was the first to enter; he placed upon the table the provisions, which the kind-hearted governor called dainties, and then left the room. The prisoner had not stirred; Baisemeaux then entered, while Aramis remained at the threshold, from which place he saw a youth about eighteen years of age, who, raising his head at the unusual noise, jumped off the bed, as he perceived the governor, and clasping his hands together, began to cry out, "My mother, my mother," in tones which betrayed such deep distress that Aramis, despite his command over himself, felt a shudder pass through his frame. "My dear boy," said Baisemeaux, endeavouring to smile, "I have brought you a diversion and an extra—the one for the mind, the other for the body; this gentleman has come to take your measure, and here are some preserves for your dessert."

"Oh, monsieur," exclaimed the young man, "keep me in solitude for a year, let me have nothing but bread and water for a year, but tell me that at the end of a year I shall leave this place, tell me that at the end of a year I shall then see my mother again."

"But I have heard you say that your mother was very poor, and that you were very badly lodged when you were living with her, while here—upon my word!"

"If she were poor, monsieur, the greater reason to restore her only means of support to her. Badly lodged with her! oh, monsieur, every one is always well lodged when he is free."

"At all events, since you yourself admit you have done nothing but write that unhappy distich——"

"But without any intention, I swear. Let me be punished,—cut off the hand which wrote it, I will work with the other—but restore my mother to me."

"My boy," said Baisemeaux, "you know very well that it does not depend upon me; all I can do for you is to increase your rations, give you a glass of port wine now and then, slip in a biscuit for you between a couple of plates."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the young man, falling backward and rolling on the ground.

Aramis, unable to bear this scene any longer, withdrew as far as the landing. "Unhappy, wretched man!" he murmured.

"Yes, monsieur, he is indeed very wretched," said the gaoler; "but it is his parents' fault."

"In what way?"

"No doubt. Why did they let him learn Latin? Too much knowledge you see; it is that which does harm. Now I, for instance, can't read or write, and therefore I am not in prison." Aramis looked at the man, who

med to think that being a gaoler in the Bastille was not being in prison. for Baisemeaux, noticing the little effect produced by his advice and his wine, he left the dungeon quite upset. "You have forgotten to close the door," said the gaoler.

"So I have," said Baisemeaux; "there are the keys, do you do it."

"I will solicit the pardon of that poor boy," said Aramis.

"And if you do not succeed," said Baisemeaux, "at least beg that he may be transferred to the ten franc list, by which both he and I shall be winners."

"If the other prisoner calls out for his mother in a similar manner," said Aramis, "I prefer not to enter at all, but will take my measure from outside."

"No fear of that, monsieur architect, the one we are now going to see is as gentle as a lamb; before he could call after his mother he must open his lips, and he never says a word."

"Let us go in, then," said Aramis, gloomily.

"Are you the architect of the prisons, monsieur?" said the gaoler.

"I am."

"It is odd, then, that you are not more accustomed to all this."

Aramis perceived that, to avoid giving rise to any suspicions, he must summon all his strength of mind to his assistance. Baisemeaux, who carried the keys, opened the door. "Stay outside," he said to the gaoler, "and wait for us at the bottom of the steps." The gaoler obeyed and withdrew.

Baisemeaux entered the first, and opened the second door himself. By the light which filtered through the iron-barred window, could be seen a handsome young man, short in stature, with closely cut hair, and a beard beginning to grow; he was sitting on a stool, his elbow resting on an arm-chair, and all the upper part of his body reclining against it. His dress, brown upon the bed, was of rich black velvet, and he inhaled the fresh air which blew in upon his breast through a shirt of the very finest cambric. As the governor entered, the young man turned his head with a look full of indifference; and on recognising Baisemeaux, he arose and saluted him courteously. But when his eyes fell upon Aramis, who remained in the background, the latter trembled, turned pale, and his hat, which he held in his hand, fell upon the ground as if all his muscles had become relaxed at once. Baisemeaux, habituated to the presence of his prisoner, did not seem to share any of the sensations which Aramis experienced, but, with all the zeal of a good servant, he busied himself in arranging on the table the pasty and crawfish he had brought with him. Occupied in this manner, he did not remark how disturbed his guest had become. When he had finished, however, he turned to the young prisoner and said, "You are looking very well,—are you so?"

"Quite well, I thank you, monsieur," replied the young man.

The effect of the voice was such as almost to overpower Aramis, and, notwithstanding his command over himself, he advanced a few steps towards him, with his eyes wide open, and his lips trembling. The movement he made was so marked that Baisemeaux, notwithstanding his occupation, observed it. "This gentleman is an architect who has come to examine your chimney," said Baisemeaux; "does it smoke?"

"Never, monsieur."

"You were saying just now," said the governor rubbing his hands together, "that it was not possible for a man to be happy in prison; here, however, is one who is so. You have nothing to complain of, I hope?"

"Nothing."

"Do you ever feel wearied?" said Aramis.—"Never."

"Ha, ha!" said Baisemeaux, in a low tone of voice; "was I right?"

"Well, my dear governor, it is impossible not to yield to evidence. Is it allowed to put any questions to him?"

"As many as you like."

"Very well; be good enough to ask him if he knows why he is here."

"This gentleman requests me to ask you," said Baisemeaux, "if you are aware of the cause of your imprisonment?"

"No, monsieur," said the young man, unaffectedly, "I am not."

"That is hardly possible," said Aramis, carried away by his feelings, in spite of himself; "if you were really ignorant of the cause of your detention, you would be furious."

"I was so during the earlier days of my imprisonment."

"Why are you not so now?"—"Because I have reflected."

"That is strange," said Aramis.—"Is it not odd?" said Baisemeaux.

"May one venture to ask you, monsieur, on what you have reflected?"

"I felt that, as I had committed no crime, Heaven could not punish me."

"What is a prison, then," inquired Aramis, "if it be not a punishment?"

"Alas! I cannot tell," said the young man; "all that I can tell you now is the very opposite of what I felt seven years ago."

"To hear you converse, to witness your resignation, one might almost believe that you liked your imprisonment."

"I endure it."

"In the certainty of recovering your freedom some day, I suppose?"

"I have no certainty; hope I have, and that is all; and yet I acknowledge that this hope becomes less every day."

"Still, why should you not again be free, since you have already been so?"

"That is precisely the reason," replied the young man, "which prevents me expecting liberty: why should I have been imprisoned at all, if it had been intended to release me afterwards?"

"How old are you?"—"I do not know."

"What is your name?"

"I have forgotten the name by which I was called."

"Who are your parents?"—"I never knew them."

"But those who brought you up?"

"They did not call me their son."

"Did you ever love any one before coming here?"

"I loved my nurse, and my flowers."

"Was that all?"—"I also loved my valet."

"Do you regret your nurse and your valet?"

"I wept very much when they died."

"Did they die since you have been here, or before you came?"

"They died the evening before I was carried off."

"Both at the same time?"—"Yes, both at the same time."

"In what manner were you carried off?"

"A man came for me, directed me to get into a carriage, which was closed and locked, and brought me here."

"Would you be able to recognise that man again?"

"He was masked."

"Is not this an extraordinary tale?" said Baisemeaux, in a low tone of voice, to Aramis, who could hardly breathe.

"It is indeed extraordinary," he murmured.

"But what is still more extraordinary is, that he has never told me so much as he has just told you."

"Perhaps the reason may be that you have never questioned him," said Aramis.

"It's possible," replied Baisemeaux; "I have no curiosity. Have you looked at the room; it's a fine one, is it not?"

"Very much so."

"A carpet——"——"Beautiful."

"I'll wager he had nothing like it before he came here."

"I think so, too." And then, again turning towards the young man, he said, "Do you not remember to have been visited, at some time or another, by a strange lady or gentleman?"

"Yes, indeed; thrice by a woman, who each time came to the door in a carriage, and entered covered with a veil, which she raised when we were together and alone."

"Do you remember that woman?"——"Yes."

"What did she say to you?"

The young man smiled mournfully, and then replied: "She inquired, as you have just done, if I were happy, and if I were getting weary."

"What did she do on arriving, and on leaving you?"

"She pressed me in her arms, held me in her embrace, and kissed me."

"Do you remember her?"——"Perfectly."

"Do you recall her features distinctly?"——"Yes."

"You would recognise her, then, if accident brought her before you, or you into her presence?"

"Most certainly."

A flush of fleeting satisfaction passed across Aramis's face. At this moment Baisemeaux heard the gaoler approaching. "Shall we leave?" he said, hastily, to Aramis.

Aramis, who probably had learnt all that he cared to know, replied, "When you like."

The young man saw them prepare to leave, and saluted them politely. Baisemeaux replied merely by a nod of the head; while Aramis, with a respect arising, perhaps, from the sight of such misfortune, saluted the prisoner profoundly. They left the room, Baisemeaux closing the door behind them.

"Well," said Baisemeaux, as they descended the staircase, "what do you think of it all?"

"I have discovered the secret, my dear governor," he said.

"Bah! What is the secret, then?"

"A murder was committed in that house."——"Nonsense!"

"But attend: the valet and the nurse died the same day."——"Well?"

"And by poison. What do you think?"

"That it is very likely to be true."

"What—that that young man is an assassin?"

"Who said that? What makes you think that poor young fellow could be an assassin?"

"The very thing I was saying. A crime was committed in his house," said Aramis, "and that was quite sufficient; perhaps he saw the criminals, and it was feared he might say something."

"The deuce! if I only thought that——"——"Well?"

"I would redouble the surveillance."

"Oh, he does not seem to wish to escape."

"You do not know what prisoners are."

"Has he any books?"——"None; they are strictly prohibited, and under M. de Mazarin's own hand."

"Have you the writing still?"—"Yes, my lord; would you like to look at it as you return to take your cloak?"

"I should, for I like to look at autographs."

"Well, then, this one is of the most unquestionable authenticity; there is only one erasure."—"Ah, ah! an erasure; and in what respect?"

"With respect to a figure. At first there was written: 'To be boarded at 50 francs.'"—"As princes of the blood, in fact?"

"But the cardinal must have seen his mistake, you understand, for he cancelled the zero, and has added a 1 before the 5. But, by-the-bye——"

"What?"—"You do not speak of the resemblance."

"I do not speak of it, dear M. de Baisemeaux, for a very simple reason,—because it does not exist."—"The deuce it doesn't."

"Or, if it does exist, it is only in your own imagination; but, supposing it were to exist elsewhere, I think it would be better for you not to speak about it."—"Really."

"The king, Louis XIV.—you understand—would be excessively angry with you, if he were to learn that you contributed, in any way, to spread the report that one of his subjects has the effrontery to resemble him."

"It is true, quite true," said Baisemeaux, thoroughly alarmed; "I have not spoken of the circumstance to any one but yourself, and must understand, monseigneur, that I perfectly rely on your being discreet."

"Oh, be easy."

"Do you still wish to see the note?"—"Certainly."

While engaged in this manner in conversation, they had returned to the governor's apartments; Baisemeaux took from the cupboard a private register, like the one he had already shown Aramis, but fastened by a lock, the key which opened it being one of a small bunch of keys which Baisemeaux always carried with him. Then placing the book upon the table, he opened it at the letter "M," and showed Aramis the following note in the column of observations:—"No books at any time, all linen and clothes of the finest and best quality to be procured; no exercise; always the same gaoler, no communications with any one. Musical instruments; every liberty and every indulgence, which his welfare may require; to be boarded at fifteen francs. M. de Baisemeaux can claim more, if the fifteen francs be not sufficient."

"Ah," said Baisemeaux, "now I think of it, I shall claim it."

Aramis shut the book. "Yes," he said, "it is indeed M. de Mazarin's handwriting; I recognise it well. Now, my dear governor," he continued as if this last communication had exhausted his interest, "let us now turn to our own little affairs."

"Well, what time for payment do you wish me to take. Fix it yourself."

"There need not be any particular period fixed: give me a simple acknowledgment for 150,000 francs."—"When to be made payable?"

"When I require it. But you understand, I shall only wish it when you yourself do so."

"Oh, I am quite easy on that score," said Baisemeaux, smiling: "but I have already given you two receipts."

"Which I now destroy," said Aramis; and, after having shown the two receipts to Baisemeaux, he destroyed them. Overcome by so great a mark of confidence, Baisemeaux unhesitatingly wrote out an acknowledgment of a debt of 150,000 francs, payable at the pleasure of the prelate Aramis, who had, by glancing over the governor's shoulder, followed the

pen as he wrote, put the acknowledgment into his pocket without seeming to have read it, which made Baisemeaux perfectly easy. "Now," said Aramis, "you will not be angry with me if I were to carry off one of your prisoners?"

"What do you mean?"

"In obtaining his pardon, of course. Have I not already told you that I took a great interest in poor Seldon?"

"Yes, quite true, you did so."—"Well?"

"That is your affair; do as you think proper. I see you have an open hand, and an arm that can reach a great way."

"Adieu, adieu." And Aramis left, carrying with him the governor's blessings.

## CHAPTER CI.

### THE TWO FRIENDS.

AT the very time M. de Baisemeaux was showing Aramis the prisoners in the Bastille, a carriage drew up at Madame de Bellière's door, and at an early hour, a young woman alighted, her head muffled in a silk veil. At the moment the servants announced Madame Vanel to Madame de Bellière, the latter was engaged, or rather was absorbed, in reading a letter which she hurriedly concealed. She had hardly finished her morning toilette, her woman being still in the next room. At the name of the footsteps of Marguerite Vanel, Madame de Bellière ran to meet her. She fancied she could detect in her friend's eye a brightness which was neither that of health nor of pleasure. Marguerite embraced her, pressed her hands, and hardly allowed her time to speak. "Dearest," she said, "are you forgetting me? Have you quite given yourself up to the pleasures of the court?"

"I have not even seen the marriage fêtes."

"What are you doing with yourself, then?"

"I am getting ready to leave for Bellière."

"For Bellière?"—"Yes."

"You are becoming rustic in your tastes, then; I delight to see you so disposed. But you are pale."—"No, I am perfectly well."

"So much the better; I was becoming uneasy about you. You do not know what I have been told."

"People say so many things."—"Yes, but this is very singular."

"How well you know how to excite curiosity, Marguerite."

"Well, I was afraid of vexing you."

"Never; you have yourself always admired me for my evenness of temper."

"Well, then, it is said that—no, I shall never be able to tell you."

"Do not let us talk about it, then," said Madame de Bellière, who detected the ill-nature which was concealed by all these prefaces, yet felt the most anxious curiosity on the subject.

"Well, then, my dear marquise, it is said that, for some time past, you no longer continue to regret Monsieur de Bellière as you used to do."

"It is an ill-natured report, Marguerite. I do regret, and shall always regret, my husband; but it is now two years since he died. I am only twenty-eight years old, and my grief at his loss ought not always to control every action and thought of my life. You, Marguerite, who are the model of a wife, would not believe me if I were to say so."

"Why not? Your heart is so soft and yielding," she said, spitefully.

"Yours is so too, Marguerite, and yet I did not perceive that you allowed yourself to be overcome by grief when your heart was wounded." These words were in direct allusion to Marguerite's rupture with the surintendant, and were also a veiled but direct reproach made against her friend's heart.

As if she only awaited this signal to discharge her shaft, Marguerite exclaimed, "Well, Eliza, it is said you are in love." And she looked fixedly at Madame de Bellière, who blushed without being able to prevent it.

"Women never escape slander," replied the marquise, after a moment's pause.—"No one slanders you, Eliza."

"What!—people say that I am in love, and yet they do not slander me?"

"In the first place, if it be true, there is no slander, but simply a scandalous loving report. In the next place—for you did not allow me to finish what I was saying,—the public does not assert that you have abandoned yourself to this passion. It represents you, on the contrary, as a virtuous but loving woman, defending herself with claws and teeth, shutting yourself up in your own house as in a fortress, in other respects as impenetrable as that of Danaë, notwithstanding Danaë's tower was made of brass."

"You are witty, Marguerite," said Madame de Bellière, trembling.

"You always flatter me, Eliza. To be brief, however, you are reported to be incorruptible and unapproachable. You can decide whether people calumniate you or not;—but what is it you are musing about while I am speaking to you?"—"I?"

"Yes; you are blushing and are quite silent."

"I was trying," said the marquise, raising her beautiful eyes, brightened with an indication of approaching anger, "I was trying to discover to what you could possibly have alluded, you who are so learned in mythological subjects, in comparing me to Danaë."

"You were trying to guess that," said Marguerite, laughing.

"Yes; do you not remember that at the convent, when we were solving our problems in arithmetic—ah! what I have to tell you is learned also—but it is my turn—do you not remember, that if one of the terms were given, we were to find out the other? Therefore do you guess now?"

"I cannot conjecture what you mean."

"And yet nothing is more simple."

"You pretend that I am in love, do you not?"—"So it is said."

"Very well; it is not said, I suppose, that I am in love with an abstraction. There must surely be a name mentioned in this report."

"Certainly, a name is mentioned."

"Very well; it is not surprising, then, that I should try to guess this name, since you do not tell it me."

"My dear marquise, when I saw you blush, I did not think you would have to spend much time in conjectures."

"It was the word Danaë which you used that surprised me. Danaë means a shower of gold, does it not?"

"That is to say that the Jupiter of Danaë changed himself into a shower of gold for her."

"My lover, then, he whom you assign me——"

"I beg your pardon; I am your friend, and assign you no one."

"That may be; but those who are evilly disposed towards me."

"Do you wish to hear the name?"

"I have been waiting this half-hour for it."

Well, then, you shall hear it. Do not be shocked ; he is a man high power."

"Good," said the marquise, as she clenched her hands like a patient at approach of the knife.

"He is a very wealthy man," continued Marguerite ; "the wealthiest, it may be. In a word, it is——"

The marquise closed her eyes for a moment.

"It is the Duke of Buckingham," said Marguerite, bursting into laughter. The perfidiousness had been calculated with extreme ability ; the name was pronounced, instead of the name which the marquise awaited, and produced precisely the same effect upon her as the badly-sharpened axes, which had hacked, without destroying, Messieurs de Chalais and De Thou on their scaffolds, had upon them. She recovered herself, however, and said, "I was perfectly right in saying you were a witty woman, for you are making the time pass away most agreeably. The joke is a most amusing one, for I have never seen the Duke of Buckingham."

"Never!" said Marguerite, restraining her laughter.

"I have never even left my own house since the duke has been at Paris."

"Oh!" resumed Madame Vanel, stretching out her foot towards a paper which was lying on the carpet near the window ; "it is not necessary for people to see each other, since they can write." The marquise smiled, for this paper was the envelope of the letter she was reading as her friend had entered, and was sealed with the surintendant's arms. As she leaned back on the sofa on which she was sitting, Madame de Bellière covered the paper with the thick folds of her large silk dress, and so concealed it. "Come, Marguerite, tell me, is it to tell me all these foolish reports that you have come to see me so early in the day?"

"No ; I came to see you in the first place, and to remind you of those bits of our earlier days, so delightful to remember, when we used to wander about together at Vincennes, and, sitting beneath an oak, or in the sylvan shade, used to talk of those we loved, and who loved us."

"Do you propose that we should go out together now?"

"My carriage is here, and I have three hours at my disposal."

"I am not dressed yet, Marguerite ; but if you wish that we should talk together, we can, without going to the woods of Vincennes, find in my own garden here, beautiful trees, shady groves, a green sward covered with anisies and violets, the perfume of which can be perceived from where we are sitting."

"I regret your refusal, my dear marquise, for I wanted to pour out my whole heart into yours."

"I repeat again, Marguerite, my heart is yours just as much in this room, or beneath the lime-trees in the garden here, as it is under the oaks in the wood yonder."

"It is not the same thing for me. In approaching nearer to Vincennes, my ardent aspirations approach nearer to that object towards which they have for some days past been directed." The marquise suddenly raised her head. "Are you surprised, then, that I am still thinking of St. Mandé?"

"Of St. Mandé!" exclaimed Madame de Bellière ; and the looks of both women met each other like two swords restless at the first time their blades were crossed.

"You, so proud too!" said the marquise, disdainfully.

"I, so proud!" replied Madame Vanel. "Such is my nature. I do not forgive neglect ; I cannot endure infidelity. When I leave any one who

weeps at my abandonment, I feel induced still to love him ; but when others forsake me, and laugh at their infidelity, I love distractedly."

Madame de Bellière could not restrain an involuntary movement.

"She is jealous," said Marguerite to herself. "Then," continued the marquise, "you are quite enamoured of the Duke of Buckingham—I mean of M. Fouquet?" Eliza felt the allusion, and all her blood seemed to have flowed towards her heart. "And you wished to go to Vincennes—to St. Mandé even?"

"I hardly know what I wished ; you would have advised me perhaps."

"In what respect?"—"You have often done so."

"Most certainly I should not have done so in the present instance, for I do not forgive as you do. I am less loving, perhaps ; but when my heart has been once wounded, it remains so always."

"But M. Fouquet has not wounded you," said Marguerite Vanel, with the most perfect simplicity.

"You perfectly understand what I mean. M. Fouquet has not wounded me ; I do not know him either from any obligation or any injury received at his hands ; but you have reason to complain of him ; you are my friend, and I am afraid I should not advise you as you would like."

"Ah, you are prejudging the case."

"The sighs you spoke of just now are more than indications."

"You overwhelm me," said the young woman suddenly, as if collecting her whole strength, like a wrestler preparing for a last struggle ; "you take only my evil dispositions and my weaknesses into calculation, and do not speak of the pure and generous feelings which I have. If, at this moment, I feel instinctively attracted towards the surintendant, if I even make an advance to him, and which, I confess, is very probable, my motive for it is, that M. Fouquet's fate deeply affects me, and because he is, in my opinion, one of the most unfortunate men living."

"Ah," said the marquise, placing her hand upon her heart, "something new, then, has occurred."

"Do you not know it?"

"I am utterly ignorant of everything about him," said Madame de Bellière, with that palpitation of anguish which suspends thought and speech, and even life itself.

"In the first place, then, the king's favour is entirely withdrawn from M. Fouquet, and conferred on M. Colbert."

"So it is stated."

"It is very clear, since the discovery of the plot at Belle-Isle."

"I was told that the discovery of the fortifications there had turned out to M. Fouquet's honour."

Marguerite began to laugh in so cruel a manner, that Madame de Bellière could at that moment have delightedly plunged a dagger in her bosom. "Dearest," continued Marguerite, "there is no longer any question of M. Fouquet's honour ; his safety is concerned. Before three days are past the ruin of the surintendant will be complete."

"Stay," said the marquise, in her turn smiling, "that is going a little too fast."

"I said three days, because I wish to deceive myself with a hope ; but most certainly the catastrophe will not extend beyond twenty-four hours."

"Why so?"

"For the simplest of all reasons—that M. Fouquet has no more money."

"In matters of finance, my dear Marguerite, some are without money to-day, who to-morrow can procure millions."

"That might be M. Fouquet's case when he had two wealthy and clever friends who amassed money for him, and wrung it from every source ; but these friends are dead."

"Money does not die, Marguerite—it may be concealed ; but it can be looked for, bought, and found."

"You see things on the bright side, and so much the better for you. It is really very unfortunate that you are not the Egeria of M. Fouquet ; you might show him the source whence he could obtain the millions which the king asked him for yesterday."

"Millions !" said the marquise, in terror.

"Four—an even number."

"Infamous !" murmured Madame de Bellière, tortured by her friend's merciless delight.

"M. Fouquet, I should think, must certainly have four millions," she replied, courageously.

"If he has those which the king requires to-day," said Marguerite, "he will not, perhaps, possess those which the king will require in a month."

"The king will require money from him again then ?"

"No doubt ; and that is my reason for saying that the ruin of this poor M. Fouquet is inevitable. Pride will induce him to furnish the money, and when he has no more he will fall."

"It is true," said the marquise, tremblingly, "the plan is a bold one ; but tell me, does M. Colbert hate M. Fouquet so very much ?"

"I think he does not like him. M. Colbert is powerful ; he improves on close acquaintance ; he has gigantic ideas, a strong will, and discretion ; he will make great strides."

"He will be surintendant ?"

"It is probable. Such is the reason, my dear marquise, why I felt myself impressed in favour of that poor man, who once loved—nay, even adored me ; and why, when I see him so unfortunate, I forgive his infidelity, which I have reason to believe he also regrets ; and why, moreover, I should not have been disinclined to afford him some consolation, or some good advice ; he would have understood the step I had taken, and would have thought kindly of me for it. It is gratifying to be loved, you know. Men value love highly when they are no longer blinded by its influence."

The marquise, bewildered, and overcome by these cruel attacks, which had been calculated with the greatest correctness and precision of aim, hardly knew what answer to return ; she even seemed to have lost all power of thought. Her perfidious friend's voice had assumed the most affectionate tone ; she spoke as a woman, but concealed the instincts of a serpent. "Well," said Madame de Bellière, who had a vague hope that Marguerite would cease to overwhelm a vanquished enemy, "why do you not go and see M. Fouquet ?"

"Decidedly, marquise, you have made me reflect. No, it would be unbecoming for me to make the first advance. M. Fouquet no doubt loves me, but he is too proud. I cannot expose myself to an affront . . . besides, I have my husband to consider. You say nothing to me. Very well, I shall consult M. Colbert on the subject." Marguerite rose smilingly, as though to take leave, but the marquise had not the strength to imitate her. Marguerite advanced a few paces, in order that she might continue to enjoy the humiliating grief in which her rival was plunged, and then said, suddenly, "You do not accompany me to the door, then ?" The marquise rose, pale and almost lifeless, without thinking of the envelope,

which had occupied her attention so greatly at the commencement of the conversation, and which was revealed at the first step she took. She then opened the door of her oratory, and without even turning her head towards Marguerite Vanel, entered it, closing the door after her. Marguerite said, or rather muttered, a few words, which Madame de Bellière did not even hear. As soon, however, as the marquise had disappeared her envious enemy, not being able to resist the desire to satisfy herself that her suspicions were really founded, advanced stealthily towards like a panther, and seized the envelope. "Ah!" she said, gnashing her teeth, "it was indeed a letter from M. Fouquet she was reading when he arrived," and then darted out of the room. During this interval, the marquise, having arrived behind the rampart, as it were, of her door, felt that her strength was failing her; for a moment she remained rigid, pale, and motionless as a statue; and then, like a statue shaken on its base by a storm of wind, she tottered and fell inanimate on the carpet. The noise of the fall resounded at the same moment as the rolling of Marguerite's carriage leaving the hotel was heard.

## CHAPTER CII.

### MADAME DE BELLIERE'S PLATE.

THE blow had been the more painful on account of its being unexpected. It was some time before the marquise recovered herself; but, once recovered, she began to reflect upon the events which had been announced to her. She therefore returned, at the risk even of losing her life in that way to that train of ideas which her relentless friend had forced her to pursue. Treason, then—dark menaces concealed under the semblance of public interest—such were Colbert's manoeuvres. A detestable delight at an approaching downfall, untiring efforts to attain this object, means of seduction no less wicked than the crime itself—such were the means which Marguerite employed. The crooked atoms of Descartes triumphed; the man without compassion was united to a woman without a heart. The marquise perceived, with sorrow rather than with indignation, that the king was an accomplice in a plot which betrayed the duplicity of Louis XIII., in his advanced age, and the avarice of Mazarin, at a period of life when he had not had the opportunity of gorging himself with French gold. The spirit of this courageous woman soon resumed its energy, and was no longer interrupted by a mere indulgence in compassionate lamentations. The marquise was not one to weep when action was necessary, nor to waste time in bewailing a misfortune when means still existed for relieving it. For some minutes she buried her face in her icy hands, and then, raising her head, rang for her attendants with a steady hand, and with a gesture betraying a fixed determination of purpose. Her resolution was taken.

"Is everything prepared for my departure?" she inquired of one of her female attendants who entered.

"Yes, madame; but it was not expected that your ladyship would leave for Bellière for the next few days."

"All my jewels and articles of value then, are locked up?"

"Yes, madame; but hitherto we have been in the habit of leaving them in Paris. Your ladyship does not generally take your jewels with you in the country."

"But they are all in order, you say?"

"Yes, in your ladyship's own room."

"The gold plate?"—"In the chest."

"And the silver plate?"—"In the large oaken closet."

The marquise remained silent for a few moments, and then said calmly, "Let my goldsmith be sent for."

Her attendants quitted the room, to execute the order. The marquise, however, had entered her own room, and inspected her casket of jewels with the greatest attention. Never, until now, had she bestowed so much attention upon riches, in which women take so much pride; never, until now, had she looked at her jewels, except for the purpose of making a selection according to the settings or their colours. On this occasion, however, she admired the size of the rubies and the brilliancy of the diamonds; she grieved over every blemish and every defect; she thought the gold light and the stones wretched. The goldsmith, as he entered, found her thus occupied. "M. Fauchaux," she said, "I believe you supplied me with my gold service?"

"I did, your ladyship."

"I do not now remember the amount of the account."

"Of the new service, madame, or of that which M. de Bellière presented to you on your marriage? for I furnished both."

"First of all, the new one?"

"The covers, the goblets, and the dishes, with their covers, the *cau-vergne*, the ice-pails, the dishes for the preserves, and the tea and coffee service, cost your ladyship sixty thousand francs."

"No more?"

"Your ladyship thought the account very high."

"Yes, yes; I remember, in fact, that it was dear; but it was the workmanship, I suppose?"

"Yes, madame; the designs, the chasings, and new patterns."

"What proportion of the cost does the workmanship form? Do not hesitate to tell me."—"A third of its value, madame."

"There is the other service, the old one, that which belonged to my husband?"

"Yes, madame; there is less workmanship in that than in the other. Its intrinsic value does not exceed thirty thousand francs."

"Thirty thousand," murmured the marquise, "But M. Fauchaux, there is also the service which belonged to my mother; all that massive plate which I did not wish to part with, on account of the associations connected with it."

"Ah! madame, that would indeed be an excellent resource for those who, unlike your ladyship, might not be in a position to keep their plate. In working that, one worked in solid metal. But that service is no longer in fashion. Its weight is its only advantage."

"That is all I care about. How much does it weigh?"

"Fifty thousand livres at the very least. I do not allude to the enormous vases for the buffet, which alone weigh five thousand livres, or ten thousand the two."

"One hundred and thirty," murmured the marquise. "You are quite sure of your figures, M. Fauchaux?"

"Positive, madame. Besides, there is no difficulty in weighing them."

"The amount is entered in my books."

"Your ladyship is extremely methodical, I am aware."

"Let us now turn to another subject," said Madame de Bellière; and she opened one of her jewel-boxes.

"I recognise these emeralds," said M. Faucheux; "for it was I who had the setting of them. They are the most beautiful in the whole court. No, I am mistaken; Madame de Châtillon has the most beautiful set; she had them from Messieurs de Guise; but your set, madame, are next."

"What are they worth?"—"Mounted?"

"No; supposing I wished to sell them."

"I know very well who would buy them," exclaimed M. Faucheux.

"That is the very thing I ask. They could be purchased, then?"

"All your jewels could be bought. It is well known that you possess the most beautiful jewels in Paris. You are not changeable in your tastes; when you make a purchase, it is of the very best; and what you purchase you do not part with."

"What could these emeralds be sold for, then?"

"A hundred and thirty thousand francs."

The marquise wrote down upon her tablets the amount which the jeweller mentioned. "The ruby necklace?" she said.

"Are they Balass rubies, madame?"—"Here they are."

"They are beautiful—magnificent. I did not know that your ladyship had these stones."

"What is their value?"

"Two hundred thousand francs. The centre one is alone worth a hundred."

"I thought so," said the marquise. "As for diamonds, I have them in numbers; rings, necklaces, sprigs, ear-rings, clasps. Tell me their value, M. Faucheux."

The jeweller took his magnifying-glass and scales, weighed and inspected them, and then silently made his calculations. "These stones," he said, "must have cost your ladyship an income of forty thousand francs."

"You value them at eight hundred thousand francs?"

"Nearly so."

"It is about what I imagined—but the settings are not included."

"No, madame; but if I were called upon to sell or to buy, I should be satisfied with the gold of the settings alone, as my profit upon the transaction. I should make a good twenty-five thousand francs."

"An agreeable sum."—"Very so, madame."

"Will you accept that profit then, on condition of converting the jewels into money?"

"But you do not intend to sell your diamonds, I suppose, madame," exclaimed the bewildered jeweller.

"Silence, M. Faucheux, do not disturb yourself about that; give me an answer simply. You are an honourable man, with whom my family has dealt for thirty years; you have known my father and mother, who were your own father and mother had served. I address you as a friend: will you accept the gold of the settings in return for a sum of ready money to be placed in my hands?"

"Eight hundred thousand francs! it is enormous."

"I know it."

"Impossible to find."—"Not so."

"But reflect, madame, upon the effect which will be produced by the sale of your jewels."

"No one need know it. You can get sets of false jewels made for you similar to the real. Do not answer a word; I insist upon it. Sell them separately, sell the stones only."

"In that way it is easy. Monsieur is looking out for some sets of jewels as well as single stones, for Madame's toilette. There will be a competition for them. I can easily dispose of 600,000 francs' worth to Monsieur. I am certain yours are the most beautiful."

"When can you do so?"—"In less than three days' time."

"Very well, the remainder you will dispose of among private individuals. For the present make me out a contract of sale, payment to be made in four days."

"I entreat you to reflect, madame; for if you force the sale, you will lose a hundred thousand francs."

"If necessary, I will lose two hundred; I wish everything to be settled this evening. Do you accept?"

"I do, your ladyship. I will not conceal from you that I shall make fifty thousand francs by the transaction."

"So much the better. In what way shall I have the money?"

"Either in gold, or in bills of the bank of Lyons, payable at M. Colbert's."

"I agree," said the marquise, eagerly; "return home and bring the money in question in notes, as soon as possible."

"Yes, madame, but for Heaven's sake——"

"Not a word, M. Fauchaux. By-the-bye, I was forgetting the silver plate. What is the value of that which I have?"

"Fifty thousand francs, madame."

"That makes a million," said the marquise to herself. "M. Fauchaux, you will take away with you both the gold and silver plate, I can assign, as a pretext, that I wish it remodelled for patterns more in accordance with my own taste. Melt it down, and return me its value in money, at once."

"It shall be done, your ladyship."

"You will be good enough to place the money in a chest, and direct one of your clerks to accompany the chest, and without my servants seeing him; and direct him also to wait for me in a carriage."

"In Madame de Fauchaux's carriage?" said the jeweller.

"If you will allow it; and I will call for it at your house."

"Certainly, your ladyship."

"I will direct some of my servants to convey the plate to your house," said the marquise, rung. "Let the small van be placed at M. Fauchaux's disposal," she said. The jeweller bowed and left the house, directing that

the van should follow him closely, saying aloud that the marquise was about to have her plate melted down in order to have other plate manufactured of a more modern style. Three hours afterwards she went to M. Fauchaux's house and received from him eight hundred thousand francs

in gold inclosed in a chest, which one of the clerks could hardly carry towards Madame Fauchaux's carriage—for Madame Fauchaux kept her

carriage. As the daughter of a president of accounts, she had brought a portion of thirty thousand crowns to her husband, who was syndic of the goldsmiths. These thirty thousand crowns had become very fruitful

during twenty years. The jeweller, though a *millionnaire*, was a modest man. He had purchased a venerable carriage, built in 1648, ten years after the king's birth. This carriage, or rather house upon wheels, excited

the admiration of the whole quarter in which he resided; it was covered with allegorical paintings, and clouds scattered over with stars. The marquise entered this somewhat extraordinary vehicle, sitting opposite to the

clerk, who endeavoured to put his knees out of the way, afraid even of

touching the marquise's dress. It was the clerk, too, who told the coachman, who was very proud of having a marquise to drive, to take the road to St. Mandé.

## CHAPTER CIII.

### THE DOWRY.

MONSIEUR FAUCHEUX'S horses were serviceable animals, with thick knees, and legs which they had some difficulty in moving. Like the carriage, they belonged to the earlier part of the century. They were not fleet, therefore, as the English horses of M. Fouquet, and consequently took two hours to get to St. Mandé. Their progress, it might be said, was majestic. Majesty, however, precludes hurry. The marquise stopped the carriage at a door well known to her, although she had only seen it once, in a circumstance, it will be remembered, no less painful than that which brought her to it again on the present occasion. She drew a key from her pocket, and inserted it in the lock, pushed open the door, which noiselessly yielded to her touch, and directed the clerk to carry the chest upstairs to the first floor. The weight of the chest was so great that the clerk was obliged to get the coachman to assist him with it. They placed it in a small cabinet, ante-room, or boudoir rather, adjoining the saloon where we once saw M. Fouquet at the marquise's feet. Madame de Belière gave the coachman a louis, smiled gracefully at the clerk, and dismissed them both. She closed the door after them, and waited in the room alone and barricaded. There was no servant to be seen about the room, but everything was prepared as though some invisible genius had divined the wishes and desires of the guest who was expected. The fire was laid, the candles in the candelabra, refreshments upon the table, books scattered about, fresh-cut flowers in vases. One might almost have declared it to be an enchanted house. The marquise lighted the candles, inhaled the perfume of the flowers, sat down, and was soon plunged in profound thought. Her deep musings, melancholy though they were, were not tinged with a certain sweetness. Spread out before her was a treasure, a million wrung from her fortune, as a gleaner plucks the blue corn-flowers from her crown of flowers. She conjured up the sweetest dreams. Her principal thought, and one that took precedence of all others, was to devise means of leaving this money for M. Fouquet without his possibility of learning from whom the gift had come. This idea, naturally enough, was the first to present itself to her mind; but although, on reflection, it appeared difficult to carry out, she did not despair of success. She would then, ring to summon M. Fouquet, and make her escape, happier if, instead of having given a million, she had herself found one. But being there, and having seen the boudoir so coquettishly decorated that it might almost be said the least particle of dust had but the moment before been removed by the servants; having observed the drawing-room so perfectly arranged that it might almost be said her presence there had driven away the fairies who were its occupants, she asked herself if the glance or gaze of those whom she had driven away—whether spirits, fairies, elves, or human creatures—had not already recognised her. To secure success, it was necessary that some steps should be seriously taken; and it was necessary, also, that the surintendant should comprehend the serious position in which he was placed, in order to yield compliance with the generous fancies of a woman. All the fascinations of an eloquent friendship would

required to persuade him ; and should this be insufficient, the maddening influence of a devoted passion, which, in its resolute determination to carry conviction, would not be turned aside. Was not the surintendant, indeed, known for his delicacy and dignity of feeling ? Would he allow himself to accept from any woman that of which she had stripped herself ? No ; he would resist ; and if any voice in the world could overcome his resistance, would be the voice of the woman he loved. Another doubt, and that a cruel one, suggested itself to Madame de Bellière with a sharp, acute pain, like a dagger-thrust. " Did he really love her ? Would that volatile mind, that inconstant heart, be likely to be fixed for a moment, even were it to gaze upon an angel ? Was it not the same with Fouquet, notwithstanding his genius and his uprightness of conduct, as with those conquerors on the field of battle who shed tears when they have gained a victory ? I must learn if it be so, and must judge of that for myself," said the marquise. Who can tell whether that heart, so coveted, is not common in its impulses, and full of alloy ? Who can tell if that mind, when the touchstone is applied to it, will not be found of a mean and vulgar character ? Come, come," she said, " this is doubting and hesitating too much ; to the proof ! " She looked at the timepiece. " It is now seven o'clock," she said ; " he must have arrived ; it is the hour for signing his papers." With a feverish impatience she rose and walked towards the mirror, in which she smiled with a resolute smile of devotedness. She touched the spring, and drew out the handle of the bell ; then, as if exhausted beforehand by the struggle she had just undergone, she threw herself on her knees, in utter abandonment, before a large couch, in which she buried her face in her trembling hands. Ten minutes afterwards she heard the spring of the door sound. The door moved upon invisible hinges, and Fouquet appeared. He looked pale, and seemed bowed down by the weight of some bitter reflection. He did not hurry, but simply came at the summons. The preoccupation of his mind must indeed have been very great, that a man, so devoted to pleasure, for whom indeed pleasure was everything, should obey such a summons so listlessly. The previous night, in fact, fertile in melancholy ideas, had sharpened his features, generally so noble in their indifference of expression, and had traced dark lines of anxiety around his eyes. Handsome and noble he still was, and the melancholy expression of his mouth, a rare expression with men, gave a new character to his features, by which his youth seemed to be renewed. Dressed in black, the lace in front of his chest much disarranged by his feverishly restless hand, the looks of the surintendant, full of dreamy reflection, were fixed upon the threshold of the room which he had so frequently approached in search of expected happiness. This gloomy gentleness of manner, this smiling sadness of expression, which had replaced his former excessive joy, produced an indescribable effect upon Madame de Bellière, who was regarding him at a distance. A woman's eye can read the face of the man she loves, its every feeling of pride, its every expression of suffering ; it might almost be said that Heaven has graciously granted to women, on account of their very weakness, more than it has accorded to other creatures. They can conceal their own feelings from a man, but from them no man can conceal his. The marquise divined in a single glance the whole weight of the unhappiness of the surintendant. She divined a night passed without sleep, a day passed in deceptions. From that moment she was firm in her own strength, and she felt that she loved Fouquet beyond everything else. She rose and approached him, saying, " You wrote to me this morning to say you were beginning to forget me, and that I, whom you had not seen

lately, had no doubt ceased to think of you. I have come to undeceive you, monsieur, and the more completely so, because there is one thing I can read in your eyes."

"What is that, madame?" said Fouquet, astonished.

"That you have never loved me so much as at this moment; in the same manner you can read, in my present step towards you, that I have not forgotten you."

"Oh! madame," said Fouquet, whose face was for a moment lighted up by a sudden gleam of joy, "you are indeed an angel, and no man can suspect you. All he can do is to humble himself before you, and entreat forgiveness."

"Your forgiveness is granted, then," said the marquise. Fouquet was about to throw himself upon his knees. "No, no," she said; "sit here, by my side. Ah! that is an evil thought which has just crossed your mind."

"How do you detect it, madame?"

"By a smile which has just injured the expression of your countenance. Be candid, and tell me what your thought was—no secrets between friends."

"Tell me, then, madame, why have you been so harsh for these three or four months past?"—"Harsh?"

"Yes; did you not forbid me to visit you?"

"Alas!" said Madame de Bellière, sighing deeply, "because your visit to me was the cause of your being visited with a great misfortune; because my house is watched; because the same eyes which have already seen you might see you again; because I think it less dangerous for you that I should come here than that you should come to my house; and, lastly, because I know you to be already unhappy enough not to wish to increase your unhappiness further."

Fouquet started, for these words recalled all the anxieties connected with his office of surintendant,—he who, for the last few minutes, had indulged in all the wild aspirations of the lover. "I unhappy?" he said, endeavouring to smile; "indeed, marquise, you will almost make me believe that I am so, judging from your own sadness. Are your beautiful eyes raised upon me merely in pity?—I look for another expression from them."

"It is not I who am sad, monsieur; look in the mirror, there—it is you who are so."

"It is true I am somewhat pale, marquise; but it is from overwork; the king yesterday required a supply of money from me."

"Yes, four millions, I am aware of it."

"You know it?" exclaimed Fouquet, in a tone of surprise; "how can you have learnt it? It was after the departure of the queen, and in the presence of one person only, that the king——"

"You perceive that I do know it; is not that sufficient? Well, go on, monsieur, the money the king has required you to supply——"

"You understand, marquise, that I have been obliged to procure it, then to get it counted, afterwards registered,—altogether a long affair. Since Monsieur de Mazarin's death, financial affairs occasion some little fatigue and embarrassment. My administration is somewhat over-taxed, and this is the reason why I have not slept during the past night."

"So that you have the amount?" inquired the marquise, with some anxiety.

"It would indeed be strange, marquise," replied Fouquet, cheerfully, "if a surintendant of finances were not to have a paltry four millions in his coffers."

"Yes, yes, I believe you either have, or will have, them."

"What do you mean by saying I shall have them?"

"It is not very long since you were required to furnish two millions."

"On the contrary, to me it seems almost an age; but do not let us talk of money matters any longer."

"On the contrary, we will continue to speak of them, for that is my only reason for coming to see you."

"I am at a loss to know your meaning," said the surintendant, whose eyes began to express an anxious curiosity.

"Tell me, monsieur, is the office of surintendant an irremovable one?"

"You surprise me, marchioness, for you speak as if you had some motive or interest in putting the question."

"My reason is simple enough; I am desirous of placing some money in your hands, and naturally I wish to know if you are certain of your post."

"Really, marquise, I am at a loss what to reply, and I cannot conceive your meaning."

"Seriously then, dear M. Fouquet, I have certain funds which somewhat embarrass me. I am tired of investing my money in land, and am anxious to intrust a friend to turn it to account."

"Surely it does not press," said M. Fouquet.

"On the contrary, it is very pressing."

"Very well, we will talk of that by-and-by."

"By-and-by will not do, for my money is there," returned the marquise, pointing out the coffer to the surintendant, and showing him, as she opened it, the bundles of notes and heaps of gold. Fouquet, who had risen from his seat at the same moment as Madame de Bellière, remained for a moment plunged in thought; then, suddenly starting back, he turned pale, and sank down in his chair, concealing his face in his hands.

"Madame, madame," he murmured, "what opinion can you have of me when you make me such an offer?"

"Of you!" returned the marquise. "Tell me rather, what you yourself think of the step I have taken."

"You bring me this money for myself, and you bring it because you now me to be embarrassed. Nay, do not deny it, for I am sure of it. Do I not know your heart?"

"If you know my heart, then, can you not see that it is my heart which offer you?"

"I have guessed rightly, then," exclaimed Fouquet. "In truth, madame, have never yet given you the right to insult me in this manner."

"Insult you," she said, turning pale, "what singular delicacy of feeling. You tell me you love me; in the name of that affection you wished me to sacrifice my reputation and my honour, yet, when I offer you money, which is my own, you refuse me."

"Madame, you were at liberty to preserve what you term your reputation and your honour. Permit me to preserve mine. Leave me to my ruin, leave me to sink beneath the weight of the hatreds which surround me, beneath the faults I have committed, beneath the load even of my remorse; but, for Heaven's sake, madame, do not overwhelm me under this last infliction."

"A short while since, M. Fouquet, you were wanting in judgment, now you are wanting in feeling."

Fouquet pressed his clenched hand upon his breast, heaving with emotion, saying, "Overwhelm me, madame, for I have nothing to reply."

"I offered you my friendship, M. Fouquet."

"Yes, madame, and you limited yourself to that."

"And what I am now doing is the act of a friend."

"No doubt it is."

"And you reject this mark of my friendship?"—"I do reject it."

"Monsieur Fouquet, look at me," said the marquise, with glistening eyes, "I now offer you my love."

"Oh! madame," exclaimed Fouquet.

"I have loved you for a long while past: women, like men, have a false delicacy at times. For a long time past I have loved you, but would not confess it. Well, then, you have implored this love on your knees, and I have refused you; I was blind, as you were a little while since; but as it was my love that you sought, it is my love that I now offer you."

"Oh! madame, you overwhelm me beneath the weight of my happiness."

"Will you be happy, then, if I am yours—yours entirely?"

"It will be the supremest happiness for me."

"Take me, then. If, however, for your sake I sacrifice a prejudice, do you for mine, sacrifice a scruple."

"Do not tempt me."—"Do not refuse me."

"Think seriously of what you are proposing."

"Fouquet, but one word. Let it be No, and I open this door," and she pointed to the door which led into the street, "and you will never see me again. Let that word be Yes, and I am yours entirely."

"Elise! Elise! But this coffer?"—"It contains my dowry."

"It is your ruin," exclaimed Fouquet, turning over the gold and papers "there must be a million here."

"Yes, my jewels, for which I care no longer if you do not love me, and for which, equally, I care no longer if you love me as I love you."

"This is too much," exclaimed Fouquet, "I yield, I yield, even were it only to consecrate so much devotion. I accept the dowry."

"And take the woman with it," said the marquise, throwing herself into his arms.

## CHAPTER CIV.

### LE TERRAIN DE DIEU.

DURING the progress of these events, Buckingham and De Wardes travelled in excellent companionship, and made the journey from Paris to Calais in undisturbed harmony together. Buckingham had hurried his departure, so that the best part of his *adieux* were very hastily made. His visit to Monsieur and Madame, to the young queen, and to the queen-dowager, had been paid collectively—a precaution on the part of the queen-mother, which saved him the distress of any private conversation with Monsieur, and saved him also from the danger of seeing Madame again. The carriages containing the luggage had already been sent on beforehand, and in the evening he set off in his travelling carriage with his attendants.

De Wardes, irritated at finding himself dragged away, in so abrupt a manner, by this Englishman, had sought in his subtle mind for some means of escaping from his fetters; but no one having rendered him any assistance in this respect, he was absolutely obliged, therefore, to submit to the burden of his own evil thoughts, and of his own caustic spirit.

Such of his friends in whom he had been able to confide, had, in their character of wits, rallied him upon the duke's superiority. Others, less

ant, but more sensible, had reminded him of the king's orders, which inhibited duelling. Others, again, and they the larger number, who Christian charity, or national vanity, might have rendered him assistance, did not care to run the risk of incurring disgrace, and would, the best, have informed the ministers of a departure which might end in a massacre on a small scale. The result was, that, after having fully operated upon the matter, De Wardes packed up his luggage, took a couple of horses, and followed only by one servant, made his way towards the barrier, where Buckingham's carriage was to await him. The duke received his adversary as he would have done an intimate acquaintance, made room beside him on the same seat with himself, ordered him refreshments, and spread over his knees the sable cloak which had been thrown upon the front seat. They then conversed of the court, without alluding to Madame ; of Monsieur, without speaking of domestic affairs ; of the king, without speaking of his brother's wife ; of the queen-mother, without alluding to her daughter-in-law ; of the king of England, without alluding to his sister-in-law ; of the state of the affections of either of the travellers, without pronouncing any name that might be dangerous. In this way the journey, which was performed by short stages, was most agreeable, and Buckingham, almost a Frenchman, from his wit and his education, was delighted at having so admirably selected his travelling companion. Elegant repasts were served, of which they partook lightly ; trials of horses in the beautiful meadows which skirted the road ; coursing, for Buckingham had his greyhounds with him ; and in such and other various ways did they pass away the time. The duke somewhat resembled the beautiful river Seine, which incloses France a thousand times in its loving embraces, before deciding upon joining its waters with the ocean. In quitting France, it was her recently adopted daughter he had brought to Paris, whom he chiefly regretted ; his every thought was a remembrance of her, and, consequently, a regret. Therefore, whenever, now and then, despite his command over himself, he was lost in thought, De Wardes left him entirely to his musings. This delicacy might have touched Buckingham, and changed his feelings towards De Wardes, if the latter, whilst preserving silence, had shown a glance less full of malice, and a smile less false. Instinctive dislikes, however, are relentless ; nothing appeases them ; a few ashes may, sometimes, apparently extinguish them ; but, beneath those ashes, the smothered flames rage more furiously. Having exhausted all the means of amusement which the route offered, they arrived, as we have said, at Calais, towards the end of the sixth day. The duke's attendants had already, since the previous evening, been in advance, and had chartered a boat, for the purpose of joining the yacht, which had been tacking about in sight, or more broadside on, whenever it felt its white wings wearied, within two or three cannon-shots from the jetty.

The boat was destined for the transport of the duke's equipages, from the shore to the yacht. The horses had been embarked, having been hoisted from the boat upon the deck in baskets, expressly made for the purpose, and wadded in such a manner that their limbs, even in the most violent fits of terror or impatience, were always protected by the soft support which the sides afforded, and their coats were not even turned. Eight of these baskets, placed side by side, filled the ship's hold. It is well known that, in short voyages, horses refuse to eat, but remain trembling all the while, with the best of food before them, such as they would have greatly coveted on land. By degrees, the duke's entire equipage was

transported on board the yacht ; he was then informed that everything was in readiness, and that they only waited for him, whenever he would be disposed to embark with the French gentleman. For no one could possibly imagine that the French gentleman would have any other accounts to settle with his grace than those of friendship. Buckingham desired the captain to be told to hold himself in readiness, but that, as the sea was beautiful, and as the day promised a splendid sunset, he did not intend to go on board until nightfall, and would avail himself of the evening to enjoy a walk on the strand. He added also, that, finding himself in such excellent company, he had not the least desire to hasten his embarkation.

As he said this, he pointed out to those who surrounded him the magnificent spectacle which the sky presented, of a deep purple colour in the horizon, and an amphitheatre of fleecy clouds ascending from the sun's disc to the zenith, assuming the appearance of a range of mountains, whose summits were heaped one upon another. The whole amphitheatre was tinged at its base by a kind of blood-like foam, fading away into opal and pearl-like tints, in proportion as the gaze was carried from the base to the summit. The sea, too, was tinged with the same reflection, and, upon the crest of every azure wave, danced a point of light, like a ruby exposed to the reflection of a lamp. The mildness of the evening, the sea-breezes, so dear to contemplative minds, a stiff breeze setting in from the east and blowing in harmonious gusts ; then, in the distance, the black outline of the yacht with its rigging traced upon the empurpled background of the sky—while, dotting the horizon, might be seen, here and there, vessels with their trimmed sails, like the wings of a sea-gull about to plunge. The spectacle, indeed, well merited admiration. A crowd of curious idlers followed the richly dressed attendants, amongst whom they mistook the intendant and the secretary, for the master and his friend. As for Buckingham, who dressed very simply, in a grey satin vest, and doublet of violet-coloured velvet, wearing his hat thrust over his eyes, and without orders or embroidery, he was taken no more notice of than De Wardes, who was dressed in black like an attorney.

The duke's attendants had received directions to have a boat in readiness at the jetty-head, and to watch the embarkation of their master, without approaching him until either he or his friend should summon them. "Whatever may happen," he had added, laying a stress upon these words, so that they might not be misunderstood. Having walked a few paces upon the strand, Buckingham said to De Wardes, "I think it is now time to take leave of each other. The tide, you perceive, is rising ; ten minutes hence it will have soaked the sands where we are now walking in such a manner that we shall not be able to keep our footing."

"I await your orders, my lord, but——"

"But, you mean, we are still upon soil which is part of the king's territory."—"Exactly."

"Well, do you see yonder a kind of little island surrounded by a circular pool of water ? the pool is increasing every minute, and the isle is gradually disappearing. This island, indeed, belongs to heaven, for it is situated between two seas, and is not shown on the king's maps. Do you observe it?"

"Yes ; but we can hardly reach it now, without getting our feet wet."

"Yes ; but observe that it forms an eminence tolerably high, and that the tide rises on every side, leaving the top free. We shall be admirably placed upon that little theatre. What do you think of it ?"

"I shall be perfectly happy wherever I may have the honour of crossing my sword with your lordship's."

"Very well, then, I am distressed to be the cause of your wetting your feet, M. de Wardes, but it is most essential you should be able to say to the king, 'Sire, I did not fight upon your majesty's territory.' Perhaps the distinction is somewhat subtle, but, since Port-Royal, you abound in subtleties of expression. Do not let us complain of this, however, for it makes your wit very brilliant, and of a style peculiarly your own. If you do not object, we will hurry ourselves, for the sea, I perceive, is rising fast, and night is setting in."

"My reason for not walking faster was, that I did not wish to precede your grace. Are you still dry land, my lord?"

"Yes, present I am. Look yonde my servants are afraid we should be drowned, and have converted the boat into a cruiser. Do you remark how curiously it dances upon the crests of the waves? But, as it makes me feel sea-sick, would you permit me to turn my back towards them?"

"You will observe, my lord, that in turning your back to them, you will have the sun full in your face."

"Oh, its rays are very feeble at this hour, and it will soon disappear. Do not be uneasy at that."

"As you please, my lord. It was out of consideration for your lordship that I made the remark."

"I am aware of that, M. de Wardes, and I fully appreciate your kindness. Shall we take off our doublets?"

"As you please, my lord."

"Do not hesitate to tell me, M. de Wardes, if you do not feel comfortable upon the wet sand, or if you think yourself a little too close to the French territory. We could fight in England, or else upon my yacht."

"We are exceedingly well placed here, my lord: only I have the honour to remark that, as the sea is rising fast, we have hardly time——"

Buckingham made a sign of assent, took off his doublet, and threw it on the ground—a proceeding which De Wardes imitated. Both their bodies, which seemed like two phantoms to those who were looking at them from the shore, were thrown strongly into relief by a dark-red, violet-coloured shadow with which the sky became overspread.

"Upon my word, your grace," said De Wardes, "we shall hardly have time to begin. Do you not perceive how our feet are sinking into the sand?"

"I have sunk up to the ankles," said Buckingham, "without reckoning that the water even is now breaking in upon us."

"It has already reached me. As soon as you please, therefore, your grace," said De Wardes, who drew his sword—a movement imitated by the duke.

"M. de Wardes," said Buckingham, "one final word. I am about to fight you because I do not like you—because you have wounded me in ridiculing a certain devotional regard I have entertained, and one which I acknowledge that, at this moment, I still retain, and for which I would very willingly die. You are a bad and heartless man, M. de Wardes, and I will do my utmost to take your life; for I feel assured that, if you survive this engagement, you will, in the future, work great mischief towards my friends. That is all I have to remark, M. de Wardes," continued Buckingham, as he saluted him.

"And I, my lord, have only this to reply to you: I have not disliked you hitherto, but since you have divined my character I hate you, and will do all I possibly can to kill you;" and De Wardes saluted Buckingham.

Their swords crossed at the same moment, like two flashes of lightning

in a dark night. The swords seemed to seek each other, guessed their position, and met. Both were practised swordsmen, and the earlier passes were without any result. The night was fast closing in, and it was so dark that they attacked and defended themselves almost instinctively. Suddenly De Wardes felt his sword arrested—he had just touched Buckingham's shoulder. The duke's sword sunk, as his arm was lowered.

"You are touched, my lord," said De Wardes, drawing back a step or two.

"Yes, monsieur, but only slightly."—"Yet you quitted your guard."

"Only from the first effect of the cold steel, but I have recovered. Let us go on, if you please." And disengaging his sword with a sinister clashing of the blade, the duke wounded the marquis in the breast.

"Touched also," he said.

"No," said De Wardes, not moving from his place.

"I beg your pardon, but, observing that your shirt was stained——" said Buckingham.

"Well," said De Wardes, furiously, "it is now your turn."

And, with a terrible lunge, he pierced Buckingham's arm through, the sword passing between the two bones. Buckingham, feeling his right arm paralysed, stretched out his left arm, seized his sword, which was about falling from his nerveless grasp, and before De Wardes could resume his guard, he thrust him through the breast. De Wardes tottered, his knees gave way beneath him, and, leaving his sword still fixed in the duke's arm, he fell into the water, which was soon crimsoned with a more genuine reflection than that which it had assumed from the clouds. De Wardes was not dead; he felt the terrible danger which menaced him, for the sea rose fast. The duke, too, perceived the danger also. With an effort, and an exclamation of pain, he tore out the blade which remained in his arm, and, turning towards De Wardes, said, "Are you dead, marquis?"

"No," replied De Wardes, in a voice choked by the blood which rushed from his lungs to his throat, "but very near it."

"Well, what is to be done? Can you walk?" said Buckingham, supporting him on his knee.

"Impossible," he replied; then falling down again, said, "Call to your people, or I shall be drowned."

"Hallo! boat there! quick, quick!"

The boat flew over the waves, but the sea rose faster than the boat could approach. Buckingham saw that De Wardes was on the point of being again covered by a wave; he passed his left arm, safe and unwounded, round his body, and raised him up. The wave ascended to his middle, but could not move him. The duke immediately began to walk towards the shore. He had hardly gone ten paces, when a second wave, rushing onwards, higher, more furious, more menacing than the former, struck him at the height of his chest, threw him over, and buried him beneath the water. At the reflux, however, the duke and De Wardes were discovered lying on the strand. De Wardes had fainted. At this moment four of the duke's sailors, who comprehended the danger, threw themselves into the sea, and in a moment were close beside him. Their terror was extreme when they observed how their master became covered with blood in proportion as the water, with which it was impregnated, flowed towards his knees and feet. They wished to carry him away.

"No, no," exclaimed the duke; "take the marquis on shore first."

"Death to the Frenchman!" cried the English, sullenly.

"Wretched knaves!" exclaimed the duke, drawing himself up with a

mighty gesture, which sprinkled them with blood, "obey directly. M. de Wardes on shore ! M. de Wardes' safety to be looked to first, or I will have you all hanged !"

The boat had by this time reached them ; the secretary and intendant apt into the sea, and approached the marquis, who no longer showed any sign of life.

"I commit him to your care, as you value your lives," said the duke. "Take M. de Wardes on shore." They took him in their arms, and carried him to the dry sand, where the tide never rose so high. A few elders and five or six fishermen had gathered on the shore, attracted by the strange spectacle of two men fighting with the water up to their knees. The fishermen, observing a group of men approaching carrying a wounded man, entered the sea until the water was up to the middle of their bodies. The English transferred the wounded man to them at the very moment the latter began to open his eyes again. The salt water and the fine sand had got into his wounds, and caused him the acutest pain. The duke's secretary drew out a purse filled with gold from his pocket, and handed it to the one among those present who appeared of most importance, saying :—"From my master, his grace the Duke of Buckingham, in order that every conceivable care may be taken of the Marquis de Wardes."

Then, followed by those who had accompanied him, he returned to the boat, which Buckingham had been enabled to reach with the greatest difficulty, but only after he had seen De Wardes out of danger. By this time it was high tide : the embroidered coats and silk sashes were lost ; many hats, too, had been carried away by the waves. The flow of the tide had borne the duke's and De Wardes' clothes to the shore, and De Wardes was wrapped in the duke's doublet, under the belief that it was his own, and they carried him in their arms towards the town.

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## CHAPTER CV.

### THREEFOLD LOVE.

AS soon as Buckingham had gone, Guiche imagined that the coast would be perfectly clear for him without any interference. Monsieur, who no longer retained the slightest feeling of jealousy, and who, besides, permitted himself to be monopolised by the Chevalier de Lorraine, allowed as much liberty and freedom in his house as the most exacting person could desire. The king, on his side, who had conceived a strong predilection for Madame's society, invented a variety of amusements, in quick succession to each other, in order to render her residence in Paris as cheerful as possible, so that, in fact, not a day passed without a ball at the Palais Royal, or a reception in Monsieur's apartments. The king had directed that Fontainebleau should be prepared for the reception of the court, and every one was using his utmost interest to get invited. Madame led a life of incessant occupation, neither her voice nor her pen were idle for a moment. The conversations with De Guiche were gradually assuming a tone of interest which might unmistakably be recognised as the preludes of a deep-seated attachment. When eyes look languishingly while the subject under discussion happens to be the colours of materials for dresses ; when a whole hour is occupied in analysing the merits and the perfume of a *sachet* or a flower ; there are words in this style of conversation, which every one might listen to, but there are gestures and sighs which every one cannot perceive. After Madame had

talked for some time with De Guiche, she conversed with the king, who paid her a visit regularly every day. They played, wrote verses, selected mottoes or emblematical devices; the spring was not only the spring-time of seasons, it was the youth of an entire people, of which those at court were the head. The king was handsome, young, and of unequalled gallantry. All women were passionately loved by him, even the queen his wife. This great king was, however, more timid and more reserved than any other person in the kingdom, to such a degree, indeed, that he had not confessed his sentiments even to himself. This timidity of bearing restrained him within the limits of ordinary politeness, and no woman could boast of having had any preference shown her beyond that shown to others. It might be foretold that the day when his real character would be displayed would be the dawn of a new sovereignty; but as yet he had not declared himself. M. de Guiche took advantage of this, and constituted himself the sovereign prince of the whole amorous court. It had been reported that he was on the best of terms with Mademoiselle de Montalais; that he had been assiduously attentive to Mademoiselle de Châtillon; but now he was not even barely civil to any of the court beauties. He had eyes and ears but for one person alone. In this manner, and, as it were, without design, he devoted himself to Monsieur, who had a great regard for him, and kept him as much as possible in his own apartments. Unsociable from natural disposition, he estranged himself too much previous to the arrival of Madame, but, after her arrival, he did not estrange himself sufficiently. This conduct, which every one had observed, had been particularly remarked by the evil genius of the house, the Chevalier de Lorraine, for whom Monsieur exhibited the warmest attachment, because he was of a very cheerful disposition even in his remarks most full of malice, and because he was never at a loss how to make time pass away. The Chevalier de Lorraine, therefore, having noticed that he was threatened with being supplanted by De Guiche, resorted to strong measures. He disappeared from the court, leaving Monsieur much embarrassed. The first day of his disappearance, Monsieur hardly inquired about him, for he had De Guiche with him, and, except the time devoted to conversation with Madame, his days and nights were rigorously devoted to the prince. On the second day, however, Monsieur, finding no one near him, inquired where the chevalier was. He was told that no one knew.

De Guiche, after having spent the morning in selecting embroidery and fringes with Madame, went to console the prince. But after dinner, as there were tulips and amethysts to look at, De Guiche returned to Madame's cabinet. Monsieur was left quite to himself during all the time he devoted to dressing and decorating himself; he felt that he was the most miserable of men, and again inquired whether there was any news of the chevalier, in reply to which he was told, that no one knew where the chevalier was to be found. Monsieur, hardly knowing in what direction to inflict his weariness, went to Madame's apartments dressed in his morning-gown. He found a large assemblage of people there laughing and whispering in every part of the room; at one end, a group of women around one of the courtiers, talking together, amid smothered bursts of laughter; at the other end, Manicamp and Malicorne were being pillaged by Montalais and Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente while two others were standing by, laughing. In another part were Madame, seated upon some cushions on the floor, and De Guiche, on his knees beside her, spreading out a handful of pearls and precious stones.

while the princess, with her white and slender finger, pointed out such among them as pleased her the most. Again, in another corner of the room, a guitar-player was playing some of the Spanish *sequedillas*, to which Madame had taken the greatest fancy ever since she had heard them sung by the young queen with a melancholly expression of voice. But the songs which the Spanish princess had sung with tears in her eyes, the young Englishwoman was humming with a smile which displayed her beautiful pearl-like teeth. The cabinet presented, in fact, the most perfect representation of unrestrained pleasure and amusement. As he entered, Monsieur was struck at beholding so many persons enjoying themselves without him. He was so jealous at the sight that he could not resist saying, like a child, "What ! you are amusing yourselves here, while I am sick and tired of being alone !"

The sound of his voice was like a clap of thunder which interrupts the warbling of birds under the leafy covert of the trees ; a dead silence ensued. De Guiche was on his feet in a moment. Malicorne tried to hide himself behind Montalais' dress. Manicamp stood bolt upright, and assumed a very ceremonious demeanour. The guitar-player thrust his guitar under a table, covering it with a piece of carpet to conceal it from the prince's observation. Madame was the only one who did not move, and, smiling at her husband, said, "Is not this the hour you usually devote to your toilette ?"

"An hour which others select, it seems, for amusing themselves," replied the prince, grumblingly.

This untoward remark was the signal for a general rout ; the women fled like a flight of terrified birds, the guitar-player vanished like a shadow ; Malicorne, still protected by Montalais, who purposely widened out her dress, glided behind the hanging tapestry. As for Manicamp, he went to the assistance of De Guiche, who naturally remained near Madame, and both of them, with the princess herself, courageously sustained the attack. The comte was too happy to bear malice against the husband ; but Monsieur bore a grudge against his wife. Nothing was wanting but a quarrel ; he sought it, and the hurried departure of the crowd, which had been so joyous before he arrived, and was so disturbed by his entrance, furnished him with a pretext.

"Why do they run away at the sight of me ?" he inquired, in a supercilious tone ; to which remark Madame replied, "that, whenever the master of the house made his appearance, the family kept aloof out of respect." As she said this, she made so funny and so pretty a grimace, that De Guiche and Manicamp could not control themselves ; they burst into a peal of laughter ; Madame followed their example, and even Monsieur himself could not resist it, and he was obliged to sit down, as for laughing he could scarcely keep his equilibrium. However, he very soon left off, but his anger had increased. He was still more furious from having allowed himself to laugh, than from having seen others laugh. He looked at Manicamp steadily, not venturing to show his anger towards De Guiche ; but at a sign which displayed no little amount of annoyance, Manicamp and De Guiche left the room, so that Madame, left alone, began sadly to pick up her pearls, no longer laughing, and speaking still less.

"I am very happy," said the duke, "to find myself treated as a stranger here, Madame," and he left the room in a passion. On his way out, he met Montalais, who was in attendance in the anteroom. "It is very agreeable to pay you a visit here, but outside the door."

Montalais made a very low obeisance. "I do not quite understand what your royal highness does me the honour to say."

"I say that when you are all laughing together in Madame's apartment, he is an unwelcome visitor who does not remain outside."

"Your royal highness does not think, and does not speak so, of yourself?"

"On the contrary, it is on my own account that I do speak and think. I have no reason, certainly, to flatter myself about the receptions I meet with here at any time. How is it that, on the very day there is music and a little society in Madame's apartments—in my own apartments, indeed, for they are mine—on the very day that I wish to amuse myself a little in my turn, every one runs away? Are they afraid to see me, that they all took to flight as soon as I appeared? Is there anything wrong, then, going on in my absence?"

"Yet nothing has been done to-day, monseigneur, which is not done every day."—"What! do they laugh like that every day?"

"Why, yes, monseigneur."

"The same group of people, and the same scraping, going on every day?"

"The guitar, monseigneur, was introduced to-day; but when we have no guitars, we have violins and flutes; women get wearied without music."

"The deuce!—and the men!"—"What men, monseigneur?"

"M. de Guiche, M. de Manicamp, and the others."

"They all belong to your highness's household."

"Yes, yes, you're right," said the prince, as he returned to his own apartments, full of thought. He threw himself into the largest of his arm-chairs without looking at himself in the glass. "Where can the chevalier be?" said he. One of the prince's attendants happened to be near him, overheard his remark, and replied,—*"No one knows, your highness."*

"Still the same answer. The first one who answers me again, 'I do not know,' I will discharge." Every one at this remark hurried out of his apartments, in the same manner as the others had fled from Madame's apartments. The prince then flew into the wildest rage. He kicked over a chiffonier, which tumbled upon the carpet, broken into pieces. He next went into the galleries, and with the greatest coolness threw down, one after another, an enamelled vase, a porphyry ewer, and a bronze chandelier. The noise summoned every one to the various doors.

"What is your highness's pleasure?" said the captain of the guards timidly.

"I am treating myself to some music," replied the prince, gnashing his teeth.

The captain of the guards desired his royal highness's physician to be sent for. But before he came, Malicorne arrived, saying to the prince, "Monseigneur, the Chevalier de Lorraine is here."

The duke looked at Malicorne, and smiled graciously at him, just as the chevalier entered in fact.

## CHAPTER CVI.

### M. DE LORRAINE'S JEALOUSY.

THE Duc d'Orleans uttered a cry of delight on perceiving the Chevalier de Lorraine. "This is fortunate, indeed," he said; "by what happy chance do I see you? Had you indeed disappeared, as every one assured me?"

"Yes, monseigneur."—"Some caprice?"

"I to venture upon caprices with your highness ! The respect——"

"Put respect out of the way, for you fail in it every day. I absolve you ; but why did you leave me?"

"Because I felt that I was of no use to you."——"Explain yourself."

"Your highness has people about you who are far more amusing than I can ever be. I felt that I was not strong enough to enter into a contest with them, and I therefore withdrew."

"This extreme diffidence shows a want of common sense. Who are those with whom you cannot contend? De Guiche?"

"I name no one."——"This is absurd. Does De Guiche annoy you?"

"I do not say he does ; do not force me to speak, however ; you know very well that De Guiche is one of our best friends."

"Who is it, then?"

"Excuse me, monseigneur, let us say no more about it." The chevalier knew perfectly well that curiosity is excited in the same way as thirst—by removing that which quenches it ; or, in other words, by delaying the explanation.

"No, no," said the prince, "I wish to know why you went away."

"In that case, monseigneur, I will tell you ; but do not be angry. I remarked that my presence was disagreeable."

"To whom?"——"To Madame."

"What do you mean?" said the duke, in astonishment.

"It is simple enough : Madame is very probably jealous of the regard you are good enough to testify for me."

"Has she shewn it to you?"

"Madame never addresses a syllable to me, particularly since a certain time."——"Since what time?"

"Since the time when, M. de Guiche having made himself more agreeable to her than I could, she receives him at every and any hour."

The duke coloured. "At any hour, chevalier ; what do you mean by that?"

"You see, your highness, I have already displeased you ; I was quite sure I should."

"I am not displeased ; but you say things a little strong. In what respect does Madame prefer De Guiche to you?"

"I shall say no more," said the chevalier, saluting the prince ceremoniously.

"On the contrary, I require you to speak. If you withdraw on that account, you must indeed be very jealous."

"One cannot help being jealous, monseigneur, when one loves. Is not your royal highness jealous of Madame? Would not your royal highness, if you saw some one always near Madame, and always treated with great favour, take umbrage at it? One's friends are as one's lovers. Your royal highness has sometimes conferred the distinguished honour upon me of calling me your friend."

"Yes, yes ; but you used a phrase which has a very equivocal significance ; you are unfortunate in your remarks."

"What phrase, monseigneur?"

"You said, 'treated with great favour.' What do you mean by favour?"

"Nothing can be more simple," said the chevalier, with an expression of great frankness ; "for instance, whenever a husband remarks that his wife summons such and such a man near her—whenever this man is always to be found by her side, or in attendance at the door of her carriage ; whenever the bouquet of the one is always the same colour as the ribbons

of the other—when music and supper parties are held in the private apartments—whenever a dead silence takes place immediately the husband makes his appearance in his wife's rooms—and when the husband suddenly finds that he has, as a companion, the most devoted and the kindest men, who, a week before, was with him as little as possible; why then—

“Well, finish.”

“Why, then, I say, monseigneur, one possibly may get jealous. But these details hardly apply; for our conversation had nothing to do with them.”

The duke was evidently much agitated, and seemed to struggle with himself a good deal. “You have not told me,” he then remarked, “why you absented yourself. A little while ago you said it was from a fear of intruding; you added, even, that you had observed a disposition in Madame's part to encourage De Guiche.”

“Pardon me, monseigneur, I did not say that.”——“You did, indeed.”

“Well, if I did say so, I noticed nothing but what was very inoffensive.”

“At all events, you remarked something.”

“You embarrass me, monseigneur.”

“What does that matter? Answer me. If you speak the truth, why should you feel embarrassed?”

“I always speak the truth, monseigneur; but I also always hesitate when it is a question of repeating what others say.”

“Ah! ah! you repeat? It appears that it is talked about, then?”

“I acknowledge that others have spoken to me on the subject.”

“Who?” said the prince.

The chevalier assumed almost an angry air, as he replied, “Monseigneur, you are subjecting me to the question; you treat me as a criminal at the bar; and the rumours which idly pass by a gentleman's ears, do not remain there. Your highness wishes me to magnify the rumour until it attains the importance of an event.”

“However,” said the duke, in great displeasure, “the fact remains that you withdrew on account of this report.”

“To speak the truth, others have talked to me of the attentions of De Guiche to Madame, nothing more; perfectly harmless, I repeat, and more than that, permissible. But do not be unjust, monseigneur, and do not attach an undue importance to it. It does not concern you.”

“M. de Guiche's attentions to Madame do not concern me?”

“No, monseigneur; and what I say to you I would say to De Guiche himself, so little do I think of the attentions he pays Madame. Nay, I would say it even to Madame herself. Only, you understand, what I am afraid of—I am afraid of being thought jealous of the favour shown, while I am only jealous as far as friendship is concerned. I know your disposition; I know that when you bestow your affections you become exclusively attached. You love Madame—and who, indeed, would not love her? Follow me attentively, as I proceed:—Madame has noticed among your friends the handsomest and most fascinating of them all; she will be disposed to influence you on his behalf, in such a way that you will neglect the others. Your indifference would kill me; it is already bad enough to have to support Madame's indifference. I have, therefore, made up my mind to give way to the favourite whose happiness I envy, even while I acknowledge my sincere friendship and sincere admiration for him. Well, monseigneur, do you see anything to object to in this reasoning? Is it that of a man of honour? Is my conduct that of a sincere friend? Answer me, at least, after having so closely questioned me.”

The duke had seated himself, with his head buried in his hands. After a silence, long enough to enable the chevalier to judge of the effect of his oratorical display, the duke rose, saying, "Come, be candid."

"As I always am."

"Very well. You know that we already observed something respecting that mad fellow, Buckingham."

"Do not say anything against Madame, monseigneur, or I shall take my leave. Is it possible you can be suspicious of Madame?"

"No, no, chevalier; I do not suspect Madame; but, in fact, I observe—I compare——"

"Buckingham was a madman, monseigneur."

"A madman about whom, however, you opened my eyes thoroughly."

"No, no," said the chevalier, quickly; "it was not I who opened your eyes. It was De Guiche. Do not confound us, I beg." And he began to laugh in so harsh a manner that it sounded like the hiss of a serpent.

"Yes, yes; I remember. You said a few words, but De Guiche showed the most jealousy."

"I should think so," continued the chevalier, in the same tone. "He was fighting for home and altar."

"What did you say?" said the duke, haughtily, thoroughly roused by an insidious jest.

"Am I not right? for does not M. de Guiche hold the chief post of honour in your household?"

"Well," replied the duke, somewhat calmed, "had this passion of Buckingham been remarked?"—"Certainly."

"Very well. Do people say that M. de Guiche's is remarked as much?"

"Pardon me, monseigneur; you are again mistaken; no one says that M. de Guiche entertains anything of the sort."—"Very good."

"You see, monseigneur, that it would have been better, a hundred times better, to have left me in my retirement, than to have allowed you to conjure up, by the aid of any scruples I may have had, suspicions which Madame will regard as crimes, and she will be right, too."

"What would you do?"—"Act reasonably."

"In what way?"

"I should not pay the slightest attention to the society of these new Epicurean philosophers; and, in that way, the rumours will cease."

"Well, I shall see; I shall think over it."

"Oh, you have time enough; the danger is not great; and then, besides, it is not a question either of danger or of passion. It all arose from a fear I had to see your friendship for me decrease. From the very moment you restore it me, with so kind an assurance of its existence, I have no longer any other idea in my head."

The duke shook his head, as if he meant to say: "If you have no more ideas, I have though." It being now the dinner-hour, the prince sent to inform Madame of it, who returned a message to the effect that she could not be present, but would dine in her own apartment.

"That is not my fault," said the duke. "This morning, having taken them by surprise, in the midst of a musical party, I got jealous; and so they are in the sulks with me."

"We will dine alone," said the chevalier, with a sigh; "I regret De Guiche is not here."

"Oh! De Guiche will not remain long in the sulks; he is a very good-natured fellow."

"Monseigneur," said the chevalier, suddenly, "an excellent idea has

struck me, in our conversation just now. I may have exasperated your highness, and caused you some dissatisfaction. It is but fitting that I should be the mediator. I will go and look for the comte, and bring him back with me."

"Ah ! chevalier, you are really a very good-natured fellow."

"You say that as if you were surprised."

"Well, you are not so tender-hearted every day."

"That may be ; but confess that I know how to repair a wrong I may have done."—"I confess that."

"Will your highness do me the favour to wait here a few minutes ?"

"Willingly ; be off, and I will try on my Fontainebleau costume."

The chevalier left the room, called his different attendants with the greatest care, as if he was giving them different orders. All went off in various directions, but he retained his *valet-de-chambre*. "Ascertain, and immediately too, if M. de Guiche is not in Madame's apartments. How can one learn it ?"

"Very easily, monsieur. I will ask Malicorne, who will learn it from Mlle. de Montalais. I may as well tell you, however, that the inquiry will be useless : for all M. de Guiche's attendants are gone, and he must have left with them."—"Try and learn, nevertheless."

Ten minutes had hardly passed when the valet returned. He brought his master mysteriously towards the servants' staircase, and showed him into a small room with a window looking out upon the garden. "This is the matter," said the chevalier : "why so many precautions ?"

"Look, monsieur," said the valet, "look yonder, under the walnut-tree."

"Ah !" said the chevalier, "I see Manicamp there. What is he waiting for ?"

"You will see in a moment, monsieur, if you wait patiently. There, do you see now ?"

"I see one, two, four musicians with their instruments, and behind them, urging them on, De Guiche himself. What is he doing there, though ?"

"He is waiting until the little door of the staircase, belonging to the ladies of honour, is opened ; by that staircase he will ascend to Madame's apartments, where some new pieces of music are going to be performed during dinner."

"That is admirable which you tell me."—"Is it not, monsieur ?"

"Was it M. de Malicorne who told you this ?"—"Yes, monsieur."

"He likes you, then ?"—"No, monsieur, it is Monsieur whom he likes."

"Why ?"—"Because he wishes to belong to his household."

"And most certainly he shall. How much did he give you for that ?"

"The secret which I now dispose of to you, monsieur."

"And which I buy for a hundred pistoles. Take them."

"Thank you, monsieur. Look, look, the little door opens, a woman admits the musicians."—"It is Montalais."

"Hush, monseigneur ; do not call out her name ; whoever says Montalais says Malicorne. If you quarrel with the one, you will be on bad terms with the other."—"Very well ; I have seen nothing."

"And I," said the valet, pocketing the purse, "have received nothing."

The chevalier, being now certain that Guiche had entered, returned to the prince, whom he found splendidly dressed and radiant with joy, as with good looks. "I am told," he exclaimed, "that the king has taken the sun as his device ; really, monseigneur, it is you whom this device would best suit."—"Where is De Guiche ?"

"He cannot be found. He has fled—has evaporated entirely. Your

scolding of this morning terrified him. He could not be found in his apartments."

"Bah! the hare-brained fellow is capable of setting off post-haste to his own estates. Poor fellow! we will recall him. Come, let us dine now."

"Monseigneur, to-day is a day of ideas; I have another."

"What is it?"

"Madame is angry with you, and she has reason to be so. You owe her her revenge; go and dine with her."

"Oh, that would be acting like a weak husband."

"It is the duty of a good husband to do so. The princess is no doubt wearied enough; she will be weeping in her plate, and her eyes will get quite red. A husband who is the cause of his wife's eyes getting red is an odious creature. Come, monseigneur, come."

"I cannot, for I have directed dinner to be served here."

"Yet see, monseigneur, how dull we shall be. I shall all be low-spirited because I know that Madame will be alone; you, hard and savage as you wish to appear, will be sighing all the while. Take me with you to Madame's dinner, and that will be a delightful surprise. I am sure we shall be very merry. You were wrong this morning."

"Well, perhaps I was."

"There is no perhaps at all, for it is a fact you were so."

"Chevalier, chevalier, your advice is not good."

"Nay, my advice is good; all the advantages are on your own side. Your violet-coloured suit, embroidered with gold, becomes you admirably. Madame will be as much vanquished by the man as by the step. Come, monseigneur."—"You decide me; let us go."

The duke left his room, accompanied by the chevalier, and went towards Madame's apartments. The chevalier hastily whispered to his valet, "Be sure that there are some people before the little door, so that no one can escape in that direction. Run, run!" And he followed the duke towards the antechambers of Madame's suite of apartments, and when the ushers were about to annoy them, the chevalier said, laughing, "His highness wishes to surprise Madame."

## CHAPTER CVII.

### MONSIEUR IS JEALOUS OF GUICHE.

MONSIEUR entered the room abruptly, as those persons do who mean well and think they confer pleasure, or as those who hope to surprise some secret, the melancholy reward of jealous people. Madame, almost out of her senses at the first bars of music, was dancing in the most unrestrained manner, leaving the dinner, which had been already begun unfinished. Her partner was M. de Guiche, who, with his arms raised and his eyes half closed, was kneeling on one knee, like the Spanish dancers, with looks full of passion, and gestures of the most caressing character. The princess was dancing round him with a responsive smile, and the same air of alluring seductiveness. Montalais stood by admiringly; La Vallière, seated in a corner of the room, looked on thoughtfully. It is impossible to describe the effect which the presence of the prince produced upon this happy company, and it would be just as impossible to describe the effect which the sight of their happiness produced upon Philip. The Comte de Guiche had no power to move; Madame remained in the middle of one of the figures and of an attitude, unable to utter a word. The Chevalier

de Lorraine, leaning his back against the doorway, smiled like a man in the very height of the frankest admiration. The pallor of the prince, and the convulsive trembling of his hands and limbs, were the first symptoms that struck those present. A dead silence succeeded the sound of the dance. The Chevalier de Lorraine took advantage of this interval to salute Madame and De Guiche most respectfully, affecting to join them together in his reverences, as though they were the master and mistress of the house. Monsieur then approached them, saying, in a hoarse tone of voice, "I am delighted. I came here expecting to find you ill and low-spirited, and I find you abandoning yourself to new amusements. Really, it is most fortunate; my house is the merriest in the whole kingdom." Then, turning towards De Guiche, "Comte," he said, "I did not know you were so good a dancer." And, again addressing his wife, he said, "Show a little more consideration for me, Madame; whenever you intend to amuse yourselves here, invite me. I am a prince, unfortunately, very much neglected."

Guiche had now recovered his self-possession, and with the spirited boldness which was natural to him, and which so well became him, he said: "Your highness knows very well that my very life is at your service, and whenever there is a question of its being needed, I am ready; but to-day, as it is only a question of dancing to music, I dance."

"And you are perfectly right," said the prince, coldly. "But, Madame," he continued, "you do not remark that your ladies deprive me of my friends? M. de Guiche does not belong to you, Madame, but to me. If you wish to dine without me, you have your ladies; when I dine alone I have my gentlemen. Do not strip me of everything."

Madame felt the reproach and the lesson, and the colour rushed to her face. "Monsieur," she replied, "I was not aware, when I came to the court of France, that princesses of my rank were to be regarded as the women in Turkey are—I was not aware that we were not allowed to be seen; but, since such is your desire, I will conform myself to it. Pray do not hesitate, if you should wish it, to have my windows barred even."

This repartee, which made Montalais and De Guiche smile, rekindled the prince's anger, no inconsiderable portion of which had already evaporated in words.

"Very well," he said, in a concentrated tone of voice, "this is the way in which I am respected in my own house."

"Monseigneur, monseigneur!" murmured the chevalier in the duke's ear, in such a manner that every one could observe he was endeavouring to calm him.

"Come," replied the prince, as his only answer to the remark, hurrying him away, and turning round with so hasty a movement that he almost ran against Madame. The chevalier followed him to his own apartment, where the prince had no sooner seated himself than he gave free rein to his fury. The chevalier raised his eyes towards the ceiling, joined his hands together, and said not a word.

"Give me your opinion!" exclaimed the prince.—"Upon what?"

"Upon what is taking place here."

"Oh, monseigneur, it is a very serious matter."

"It is abominable! I cannot live in this manner."

"How unhappy all this is," said the chevalier. "We hoped to enjoy tranquillity, after that madman Buckingham had left."

"And this is worse."

"I do not say that, monseigneur."

"Yes, but I say it, for Buckingham would never have ventured upon a fourth part of what we have just now seen."

"What do you mean?"

"To conceal one's self for the purpose of dancing, and to feign indisposition in order to dine *tete-à-tete*."—"No, no, monseigneur."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the prince, exciting himself like a self-willed child; but I will not endure it any longer, I must learn what is really going on."

"Oh, monseigneur, an exposure——"

"By Heaven, monsieur, am I to put myself out of the way, when people show so little consideration for me! Wait for me here, chevalier, wait for me here." The prince disappeared in the neighbouring apartment, and inquired of the gentlemen in attendance if the queen-mother had returned from chapel. Anne of Austria felt that her happiness was now complete; peace restored to her family, a nation delighted with the presence of a young monarch, who had shown an aptitude for affairs of great importance; the revenues of the state increased; external peace assured; everything seemed to promise a tranquil future for her. Her thoughts recurred, now and then, to that poor young man whom she had received as a mother, and had driven away as a hard-hearted step-mother, and she sighed as she thought of him.

Suddenly, the Duc d'Orleans entered her room. "Dear mother," he exclaimed hurriedly, closing the door, "things cannot go on as they now are."

Anne of Austria raised her beautiful eyes towards him, and with an unmoved gentleness of manner, said, "What things do you allude to?"

"I wish to speak of Madame."

"Your wife?"—"Yes, madame."

"I suppose that silly fellow Buckingham has been writing a farewell letter to her."

"Oh! yes, madame; of course, it is a question of Buckingham."

"Of whom else could it be, then? for that poor fellow was, wrongly enough, the object of your jealousy, and I thought——"

"My wife, madame, has already replaced the Duke of Buckingham."

"Philip, what are you saying? You are speaking very heedlessly."

"No, no.—Madame has so managed matters, that I am still jealous."

"Of whom, in Heaven's name?"

"Is it possible you have not remarked it? Have you not noticed that M. de Guiche is always in her apartments—always with her."

The queen clapped her hands together, and began to laugh. "Philip," she said, "your jealousy is not merely a defect, it is a positive disease."

"Whether a defect or a disease, madame, I am the sufferer from it."

"And do you imagine, that a complaint which exists only in your own imagination can be cured? You wish it to be said, you are right in being jealous, when there is no ground whatever for your jealousy."

"Of course, you will begin to say for this one what you always said on behalf of the other."

"Because, Philip," said the queen dryly, "what you did for the other, you are going to do for this one."

The prince bowed, slightly annoyed. "If I were to give you facts," he said, "will you believe me?"

"If it regarded anything else but jealousy, I would believe you without your bringing facts forward; but, as jealousy is in the case, I promise nothing."

"It is just the same as if your majesty were to desire me to hold my tongue, and sent me away unheard."

"Far from it ; as you are my son, I owe you a mother's indulgence."

"Oh, say what you think ; you owe me as much indulgence as a madman deserves."

"Do not exaggerate, Philip, and take care how you represent your wife to me as a woman of a depraved mind——"

"But facts, mother, facts !"——"Well, I am listening."

"This morning, at ten o'clock, they were playing music in Madame's apartments."——"No harm in that, surely."

"M. de Guiche was talking with her alone——Ah ! I forgot to tell you that, during the last ten days, he has never left her side."

"If they were doing any harm they would hide themselves."

"Very good," exclaimed the duke, "I expected you to say that. Pray do not forget what you have just said. This morning, I took them by surprise, and showed my dissatisfaction in a very marked manner."

"Rely upon it, that is quite sufficient, it was, perhaps, even a little too much. These young women easily take offence. To reproach them for an error they have not committed is, sometimes, almost the same as telling them they might do it."

"Very good, very good ; but wait a minute. Do not forget what you have just this minute said, that this morning's lesson ought to have been sufficient, and that if they had been doing what was wrong, they would have concealed themselves."——"Yes, I said so."

"Well, just now, repenting of my hastiness of this morning, and knowing that Guiche was sulking in his own apartments, I went to pay Madame a visit. Can you guess what, or whom, I found there?—Another set of musicians ; more dancing, and Guiche himself—he was concealed there."

Anne of Austria frowned. "It was imprudent," she said. "What did Madame say?"——"Nothing."

"And Guiche?"

"As much—oh, no ! he muttered some impertinent remark or another."

"Well, what is your opinion, Philip?"

"That I have been made a fool of ; that Buckingham was only a pretext and that Guiche is the one who is really guilty."

Anne shrugged her shoulders. "Well," she said, "what else?"

"I wish De Guiche to be dismissed from my household, as Buckingham was, and I shall ask the king, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless you, my dear mother, who are so clever and so kind, will execute the commission yourself."

"I shall not do it, Philip."——"What, madame?"

"Listen, Philip ; I am not disposed to pay people ill compliments every day ; I have some influence over young people, but I cannot take advantage of it without running the chance of losing it altogether. Besides there is nothing to prove that M. de Guiche is guilty."

"He has displeased me."——"That is your own affair."

"Very well, I know what I shall do," said the prince, impetuously.

Anne looked at him with some uneasiness. "What do you intend to do?" she said.

"I will have him drowned in my reservoir, the next time I find him in my apartments again." Having launched this terrible threat, the prince expected his mother would be frightened out of her senses ; but the queen was unmoved by it.——"Do so," she said.

Philip was as weak as a woman, and began to cry out, "Every one betrays me,—no one cares for me ; my mother even joins my enemies."

Your mother, Philip, sees further in the matter than you do, and does care about advising you, since you do not listen to her."

"I will go to the king."

"I was about to propose that to you. I am now expecting his majesty ; the hour he usually pays me a visit ; explain the matter to him yourself."

He had hardly finished when Philip heard the door of the anteroom open with some noise. He began to feel nervous. At the sound of the king's footsteps, which could be heard upon the carpet, the duke hurriedly made his escape out of the room. Anne of Austria could not resist laughing, and was laughing still when the king entered. He came very affectionately to inquire after the even now uncertain health of the queen-mother, and to announce to her that the preparations for the journey to Fontainebleau were complete. Seeing her laugh, his uneasiness on her account diminished, and he addressed her in a laughing tone himself. Anne of Austria took him by the hand, and in a voice full of playfulness, said, "Do you know, sire, that I am proud of being a Spanish man?"

"Why, madame?"

"Because Spanish women are worth more than English women at present."—"Explain yourself."

"Since your marriage, you have not, I believe, had a single reproach make against the queen."—"Certainly not."

"And you, too, have been married some time. Your brother, on the contrary, has been married only a fortnight."—"Well?"

"He is now finding fault with Madame a second time."

"What, Buckingham still?"

"No, another."

"Who?"—"Guiche."

"Really, Madame is a coquette, then."—"I fear so."

"My poor brother," said the king, laughing.

"You do not mind coquetting, it seems?"

"In Madame, certainly I do ; but Madame is not a coquette at heart."

"That may be, but your brother is excessively angry about it."

"What does he want?"—"He wishes to drown Guiche."

"That is a violent measure to resort to."

"Do not laugh, he is extremely irritated. Think of what can be done."

"To save Guiche—certainly."

"Oh, if your brother heard you, he would conspire against you as your uncle Monsieur did against your father."

"No ; Philip has too much affection for me for that, and I on my side, have too great a regard for him ; we shall live together on very good terms. But what is the substance of his request?"

"That you will prevent Madame from being a coquette, and Guiche from being amiable."

"Is that all? My brother has an exalted idea of sovereign power. To reform a woman ! not to say a word about reforming a man !"

"How will you set about it?"

"With a word to Guiche, who is a clever fellow, I will undertake to convince him."—"But Madame?"

"That is more difficult ; a word will not be enough. I will compose a comedy and read it to her."—"There is no time to lose."

"Oh, I will use the utmost diligence. There is a repetition of the ballet this afternoon."

"You will read her a lecture while you are dancing?"

"Yes, madame."—"You promise to convert her?"

"I will root out the heresy altogether, either by convincing her, or by extreme measures."

"That is all right, then. Do not mix me up in the affair; Madame would never forgive me in her life, and, as a mother-in-law, I ought to try and live on good terms with my daughter-in-law."

"The king, madame, will take all upon himself. But let me reflect."

"What about?"

"It would be better, perhaps, if I were to go and see Madame in her own apartment."

"Would that not seem a somewhat serious step to take?"

"Yes; but seriousness is not unbecoming in preachers, and the music of the ballet would drown one half of my arguments. Besides, the object is to prevent any violent measures on my brother's part, so that a little precipitation may be advisable. Is Madame in her own apartment?"

"I believe so."

"What is my statement of grievances to consist of?"

"In a few words, of the following: music uninterruptedly; Guiche assiduity; suspicions of treasonable plots and practices."

"And the proofs?"—"There are none."

"Very well; I shall go at once to see Madame." The king turned to look in the mirrors at his costume, which was very rich, and his face which was as radiant and sparkling as diamonds. "I suppose my brother is kept a little at a distance," said the king.

"Fire and water cannot possibly be more opposite."

"That will do. Permit me, madame, to kiss your hands, the most beautiful hands in France."

"May you be successful, sire,—be the family peace-maker."

"I do not employ an ambassador," said Louis: "which is as much as to say that I shall succeed." He laughed as he left the room, and carefully dusted his dress as he went along.

## CHAPTER CVIII.

### THE MEDIATOR.

WHEN the king made his appearance in Madame's apartments, the courtiers, whom the news of a conjugal misunderstanding had dispersed in the various apartments, began to entertain the most serious apprehensions. A storm, too, was brewing in that direction, the elements of which the Chevalier de Lorraine, in the midst of the different groups, was analysing with delight, contributing to the weaker, and acting, according to his own wicked designs, in such a manner with regard to the stronger, as to produce the most disastrous consequences possible. As Anne of Austria had herself said, the presence of the king gave a solemn and serious character to the event. Indeed, in the year 1662, the dissatisfaction of Monsieur with Madame, and the king's intervention in the private affairs of Monsieur, was a matter of no inconsiderable moment.

The boldest, even, who had been the associates of the Comte de Guiche had, from the first moment, held aloof from him, with a sort of nervous apprehension; and the Comte himself, infected by the general panic, retired to his own apartments alone. The king entered Madame's private apartments, acknowledging and returning the salutations, as he was always

in the habit of doing. The ladies of honour were ranged in a line on his passage along the gallery. Although his majesty was very much preoccupied, he gave the glance of a master at the two rows of young and beautiful girls, who modestly cast down their eyes, blushing as they felt the king's gaze upon them. One only of the number, whose long hair fell in silken masses upon the most beautiful skin imaginable, was pale, and could hardly sustain herself, notwithstanding the knocks which her companion gave her with her elbow. It was La Vallière, whom Montalais supported in that manner, by whispering some of that courage to her with which she herself was so abundantly provided. The king could not resist turning round to look at them again. Their faces, which had already been raised, were again lowered, but the only fair head among them remained motionless, as if all the strength and intelligence she had left, had abandoned her. When he entered Madame's room, Louis found his sister-in-law reclining upon the cushions of her cabinet. She rose and made a profound reverence, murmuring some words of thanks for the honour she was receiving. She then resumed her seat, overcome by a sudden weakness, which was no doubt assumed, for a delightful colour animated her cheeks, and her eyes, still red from the tears she had recently shed, never had more fire in them. When the king was seated, and as soon as he had remarked, with that accuracy of observation which characterised him, the disorder of the apartment, and the no less great disorder of Madame's countenance, he assumed a playful manner, saying, "My dear sister, at what hour to-day would you wish the repetition of the *ballet* to take place?"

Madame, shaking her charming head, slowly and languishingly said: "Ah! sire, will you graciously excuse my appearance at the repetition; I was about to send to inform your majesty that I could not attend to-day."

"Indeed," said the king in apparent surprise; "are you not well?"

"No, sire."

"I will summon your medical attendants, then."

"No, for they can do nothing for my indisposition."

"You alarm me."

"Sire, I wish to ask your majesty's permission to return to England."

The king started. "Return to England," he said, "do you really say what you mean?"

"I say it reluctantly, sire," replied the granddaughter of Henry IV., firmly, her beautiful black eyes flashing. "I regret to have to confide such matters to your majesty, but I feel myself too unhappy at your majesty's court; and I wish to return to my own family."

"Madame, madame," exclaimed the king as he approached her.

"Listen to me, sire," continued the young woman, acquiring by degrees that ascendancy over her interrogator which her beauty and her nervous nature conferred; "young as I am, I have already suffered humiliation, and have endured disdain here. Oh! do not contradict me, sire," she said with a smile. The king coloured.

"Then," she continued, "I have reasoned myself into the belief that Heaven had called me into existence with that object, I, the daughter of a powerful monarch; that since my father had been deprived of life, Heaven could well smite my pride. I have suffered greatly; I have been the cause, too, of my mother suffering much; but I have sworn that if Providence had ever placed me in a position of independence, even were it that of a workwoman of the lower classes, who gains her bread by her labour, I would never suffer humiliation again. That day has now arrived; I have been restored to the fortune due to my rank and to my birth; I

have even ascended again the steps of a throne, and I thought that, allying myself with a French prince, I should find in him a relation, friend, an equal; but I perceive I have found only a master, and I rebel. My mother shall know nothing of it; you whom I respect, and whom I love——” The king started; never had any voice so gratified his ear.

“You, sire, who know all, since you have come here; you will, perhaps, understand me. If you had not come, I should have gone to you. I wish for permission to pass freely. I leave it to your delicacy of feeling to exculpate and to protect me.”

“My dear sister,” murmured the king, overpowered by this bold attack, “have you reflected upon the enormous difficulty of the project you have conceived?”

“Sire, I do not reflect, I feel. Attacked, I instinctively repel the attack, nothing more.”

“Come, tell me what have they done to you?” said the king.

The princess, it will have been seen, by this peculiarly feminine manœuvre, had escaped every reproach, and advanced on her side a far more serious one; from an accused, she became the accuser. It is an infallible sign of guilt; but notwithstanding that, all women, even the least clever of the sex, invariably know how to derive some means of attaining success. The king had forgotten that he had paid her a visit, in order to say to her, “What have you done to my brother?” and that he was reduced to saying to her, “What have they done to you?”

“What have they done to me,” replied Madame; “one must be a woman to understand it, sire,—they have made me weep;” and, with one of her fingers, whose slenderness and perfect whiteness were unequalled, she pointed to her brilliant eyes swimming in tears, and again began to weep.

“I implore you, my dear sister,” said the king, advancing to take her warm and throbbing hand, which she abandoned to him.

“In the first place, sire, I was deprived of the presence of my brother’s friend. The Duke of Buckingham was an agreeable, cheerful visitor, my own countryman, who knew my habits—I will say almost a companion, so accustomed had we been to pass our days together, with our other friends upon the beautiful piece of water at St. James’s.”

“But Villiers was in love with you.”

“A pretext! What does it matter,” she said seriously, “whether the duke was in love with me or not? Is a man in love so very dangerous for me? Ah, sire, it is not sufficient for a man to love a woman.” And she smiled so tenderly, and with so much archness, that the king felt his heart beat and throb within his breast.

“At all events, if my brother were jealous?” interrupted the king.

“Very well, I admit that is a reason; and the duke was sent away accordingly.”——“No, not sent away.”

“Driven away, expelled, dismissed, then, if you prefer it, sire. One of the first gentlemen of Europe was obliged to leave the court of the King of France, of Louis XIV., like a beggar, on account of a glance or a bouquet. It was little worthy of the most gallant court. But forgive me, sire; I forgot that, in speaking thus, I am attacking your sovereign power.”

“I assure you, my dear sister, it was not I who dismissed the Duke of Buckingham; I was very charmed with him.”

“It was not you?” said Madame; “ah, so much the better!” and she emphasised the “so much the better” as if she had instead said, “so much the worse.”

few minutes' silence ensued. She then resumed : "The Duke of  
ingham having left, I now know why, and by whose means. I  
ght I should have recovered my tranquillity ; but not at all, for all at  
Monsieur finds another pretext—all at once——"

All at once," said the king, playfully, "some one else presents himself.  
but natural ; you are beautiful, and will always meet with those who  
love you."

In that case," exclaimed the princess, "I shall create a solitude around  
which indeed seems to be what is wished, and what is being prepared  
me ; but no, I prefer to return to London. There I am known and  
eciated ; I shall have friends, without fearing they may be regarded  
y lovers. Shame ! it is a disgraceful suspicion, and unworthy a gentle-  
l. Monsieur has lost everything in my estimation, since he has shown  
he can be the tyrant of a woman."

Nay, nay ; my brother's only fault is that of loving you."

Love me ! Monsieur love me ! Ah, sire ;" and she burst out laughing.  
onsieur will never love any woman," she said ; "Monsieur loves him-  
too much. No, unhappily for me, Monsieur's jealousy is of the worst  
d—he is jealous without love."

Confess, however," said the king, who began to be excited by this  
ied and animated conversation—"confess that Guiche loves you."

Ah, sire, I know nothing about that."

You must have perceived it ; a man who loves readily betrays himself."

M. de Guiche has not betrayed himself."

My dear sister, you are defending M. de Guiche."

I, indeed ! Ah, sire, I only needed a suspicion from yourself to com-  
e my wretchedness."

"No, madame, no," returned the king, hurriedly ; "do not distress  
rself—nay, you are weeping. I implore you to calm yourself."

She wept, however, and large tears fell upon her hands. The king took  
e of her hands in his, and kissed the tears away. She looked at him so  
lly, and with so much tenderness, that he felt his heart throb under her  
ze.

"You have no kind of feeling, then, for Guiche ?" he said, more dis-  
bed than became his character of mediator.

"None, absolutely none."

"Then I can reassure my brother in that respect ?"

"Nothing will satisfy him, sire. Do not believe he is jealous ; Monsieur  
s been badly advised by some one, and he is of an anxious disposition."

"He may well be so when you are concerned," said the king.

Madame cast down her eyes, and was silent ; the king did so likewise,  
ll holding her hand all the while. His momentary silence seemed to  
st an age. Madame gently withdrew her hand, and from that moment  
e felt her triumph was certain, and that the field of battle was her own.

"Monsieur complains," said the king, "that you prefer the society of  
ivate individuals to his own conversation and society."

"But Monsieur passes his life in looking at his face in the glass, and in  
otting all sorts of spiteful things against women with the Chevalier de  
orraine."

"Oh, you are going somewhat too far."

"I only say what is the fact. Do you observe for yourself, sire, and you  
ill see that I am right."

"I will observe ; but, in the meantime, what satisfaction can I give my  
rother ?"—"My departure."

"You repeat that word!" exclaimed the king, imprudently, as if, during the last ten minutes, such a change had been produced that Madame would have had all her ideas on the subject thoroughly changed.

"Sire, I cannot be happy here any longer," she said. "M. de Guiche annoys Monsieur; will he be sent away too?"

"If it be necessary, why not?" replied the king, smiling.

"Well, and after M. de Guiche—whom, by the bye, I shall regret—warn you, sire."

"Ah, you will regret him?"

"Certainly; he is amiable, he has a great friendship for me, and I amuses me."

"If Monsieur were only to hear you," said the king, slightly annoyed "do you know, I would not undertake to make it up again between you nay, I would not even attempt it."

"Sire, can you, even now, prevent Monsieur from being jealous of the first person who may approach? I know very well that M. de Guiche is not the first."

"Again, I warn you that, as a good brother, I shall take a dislike De Guiche."

"Ah, sire, do not, I entreat you, adopt either the sympathies or the dislikes of Monsieur. Remain the king; far better for yourself and for every one else."

"You jest most charmingly, madame; and I can well understand how those whom you attack must adore you."

"And is that the reason why you, sire, whom I had regarded as my defender, are about to join those who persecute me?" said Madame.

"I your persecutor! Heaven forbid!"

"Then," she continued, languishingly, "grant me a favour."

"Whatever you wish."—"Let me return to England."

"Never, never!" exclaimed Louis XIV.—"I am a prisoner, then?"

"In France, yes."—"What must I do, then?"

"I will tell you. Instead of devoting yourself to friendships which are somewhat unsuitable, instead of alarming us by your retirement, remain always in our society, do not leave us, let us live as a united family. M. de Guiche is certainly very amiable; but if, at least, we do not possess his wit—"

"Ah, sire, you know very well that you are pretending to be modest."

"No, I swear to you. One may be a king, and yet feel that he possesses fewer chances of pleasing than many other gentlemen."

"I am sure, sire, that you do not believe a single word you are saying."

The king looked at Madame tenderly, and said, "Will you promise me one thing?"—"What is it?"

"That you will no longer waste upon strangers, in your own apartments, the time which you owe us. Shall we make an offensive and defensive alliance against the common enemy?"

"An alliance? With you, sire?"

"Why not? Are you not a sovereign power?"

"But are you, sire, a very faithful ally?"

"You shall see, madame."

"And when shall this alliance commence?"—"This very day."

"I will draw up the treaty, and you shall sign it."—"Blindly."

"Then, sire, I promise you wonders; you are the star of the court, and when you make your appearance everything will be resplendent."

"Oh, madame, madame," said Louis XIV., "you know well that the

brilliancy which does not proceed from yourself, and that if I assume sun as my device, it is only an emblem."

Sire, you flatter your ally, and you wish to deceive her," said Madame, menacing the king with her finger raised menacingly.

What! you believe I am deceiving you, when I assure you of my action?"—"Yes."

What makes you so suspicious?"—"One thing."

What is it? I shall indeed be unhappy if I do not overcome it."

That one thing in question, sire, is not in your power, not even in the power of Heaven."

Tell me what it is?"—"The past."

I do not understand, madame," said the king, precisely because he had understood her but too well.

The princess took his hand in hers. "Sire," she said, "I have had the fortune to displease you for so long a period, that I have almost the right to ask myself to-day why you were able to accept me as a sister-in-law."

Displease me! You have displeased me?"

Nay, do not deny it, for I remember it well."

Our alliance shall date from to-day," exclaimed the king, with a warmth that was not assumed. "You will not think any more of the past, will you? I myself am resolved that I will not. I shall always remember the present; I have it before my eyes: look." And he led the princess before a mirror, in which she saw herself reflected, blushing and beautiful enough to overcome a saint.

"It is all the same," she murmured, "it will not be a very worthy alliance."

"Must I swear?" inquired the king, intoxicated by the voluptuous turn of his whole conversation had taken.

"Oh, I do not refuse a good oath," said Madame, "it has always the influence of security."

The king knelt upon a footstool, and took hold of Madame's hand. She, with a smile that a painter could not succeed in depicting, and which a poet only could imagine, gave him both her hands, in which he hid his burning face. Neither of them could utter a syllable. The king felt Madame withdraw her hands, caressing his face while she did so. He rose immediately and left the apartment. The courtiers remarked his heightened colour, and concluded that the scene had been a stormy one. The Chevalier de Lorraine, however, hastened to say, "Nay, be comforted, gentlemen, his majesty is always pale when he is angry."

## CHAPTER CIX.

### THE ADVISERS.

THE king left Madame in a state of agitation which it would have been difficult even for himself to have explained. It is impossible, in fact, to explain the secret play of those strange sympathies, which suddenly, and apparently without any cause, are excited, after many years passed in the deepest calmness and indifference, by two hearts destined to love each other. Why had Louis formerly disdained, almost hated, Madame? Why did he now find the same woman so beautiful, so captivating? And why, if only were his thoughts occupied about her, but still more, why were they so occupied about her? Why, in fact, had Madame, whose eyes and mind were sought for in another direction, shown during the last week to-

wards the king a semblance of favour, which encouraged the belief of still greater regard. It must not be supposed that Louis proposed to himself any plan of seduction; the tie which united Madame to his brother was, or at least seemed for him, an insuperable barrier; he was even too far removed from that barrier to perceive its existence. But on the downward path of those passions in which the heart rejoices, towards which youth impels us, no one can decide where to stop, not even he who has in advance calculated all the chances of his own success or of another's success. As far as Madame was concerned, her regard for the king may easily be explained: she was young, a coquette, and ardently fond of admiration. Hers was one of those buoyant, impetuous natures, which upon a theatre would leap over the greatest obstacles to obtain an acknowledgment of applause from the spectators. It was not surprising, then, that, after having been adored by Buckingham, by De Guiche, who was superior to Buckingham, even if it were only from that great merit, so much appreciated by women, that is to say, novelty—it was not surprising, we may say, that the princess should raise her ambition to being admired by the king, who not only was the first person in the kingdom, but was one of the handsomest and wittiest men in it. As for the sudden passion which Louis was inspired for his sister-in-law, physiology would perhaps supply the explanation of it by some hackneyed common-place reason, and nature from some of her mysterious affinity of characters. Madame had the most beautiful black eyes in the world: Louis, eyes as beautiful but blue. Madame was laughter-loving and unreserved in her manner; Louis, melancholy and diffident. Summoned to meet each other, for the first time, upon the grounds of interest and common curiosity, these two opposite natures were mutually influenced by the contact of their reciprocal contradictions of character. Louis, when he returned to his own rooms, acknowledged to himself that Madame was the most attractive woman of his court. Madame, left alone, delightedly thought that she had made a great impression on the king. This feeling with her must remain passive, whilst the king could not but act with all the natural vehemence of the heated fancies of a young man, and of a young man who has but to express a wish, to see his wishes executed.

The first thing the king did was to announce to Monsieur that everything was quietly arranged; that Madame had the greatest respect, the sincerest affection for him; but that she was of a proud, impetuous character, and that her susceptibilities were so acute as to require a very careful management.

Monsieur replied in the sour tone of voice he generally adopted with his brother, that he could not very well understand the susceptibility of a woman whose conduct might, in his opinion, expose her to censorious remarks, and that if any one had a right to feel wounded, it was he, Monsieur himself. To this the king replied in a quick tone of voice which showed the interest he took in his sister-in-law, "Thank heaven, Madame is above censure."

"The censure of others, certainly, I admit," said Monsieur, "but not above mine, I presume."

"Well," said the king, "all I have to say, Philip, is, that Madame's conduct does not deserve your censure. She certainly is heedless and singular, but professes the best feelings. The English character is never always well understood in France, and the liberty of English manners sometimes surprises those who do not know the extent to which this liberty is enriched by innocence."

"I" said Monsieur, more and more piqued, "from the very moment your majesty absolves my wife, whom I accuse, my wife is not guilty, I have nothing more to say."

"Philip," replied the king hastily, for he felt the voice of conscience ringing softly in his heart that Monsieur was not altogether wrong, "I have done, and what I have said, was only for your happiness. I told that you complained of a want of confidence or attention on my part, and I did not wish your uneasiness to be prolonged any longer. It is part of my duty to watch over your household, as over that of the humblest of my subjects. I have seen therefore with the sincerest regret that your apprehensions have no foundation."

"And," continued Monsieur, in an interrogative tone of voice, and fixing his eyes upon his brother, "what your majesty has discovered for Madame de Guiche? I bow myself to your majesty's superior judgment—have you also done it for those who have been the cause of the scandal of which I am the victim?"

"You are right, Philip," said the king: "I will consider that point." These words comprised an order as well as a consolation; the prince acquiesced so, and withdrew. As for Louis, he went to seek his mother, and felt that he had need of a more complete absolution than that he had just received from his brother. Anne of Austria did not entertain for De Guiche the same reasons for indulgence she had had for Buckingham. She perceived, at the very first words he pronounced, that Louis was not disposed to be severe, as she was indeed. It was one of the duties of the good queen, in order to succeed in ascertaining the truth.

But Louis was no longer in his apprenticeship; already for more than a year past he had been king, and during that year he had learned to dissimulate. Listening to Anne of Austria, in order to permit her to follow her own thoughts, testifying his approval only by look and gesture, he became convinced, from certain profound glances, and from certain skilful insinuations, that the queen, so clear-sighted in matters of gallantry, had, if not guessed, at least suspected, his weakness for her. Of all his auxiliaries, Anne of Austria would be the most important to secure: of all his enemies, Anne of Austria would have been the most dangerous. Louis therefore changed his manœuvres. He commanded of Madame, absolved Monsieur, listened to what his mother had said of De Guiche, as he had previously listened to what she had had to say of Buckingham, and then, when he saw that she thought she had obtained a complete victory over him, he left her. The whole of the court, to say, all the favourites and more intimate associates, and they were numerous, since there were already five masters, were assembled in the evening for the repetition of the ballet. This interval had been occupied by poor De Guiche in receiving visits. Among the number was the Chevalier de Lorraine, which he hoped and feared nearly to an equal extent. It was that of the Chevalier de Lorraine. About three o'clock in the afternoon the Chevalier entered De Guiche's rooms. His looks were of the most assuring character. "Monsieur," said he to De Guiche, "was in an excellent humour, and no one could say that the slightest cloud had passed across the royal sky. Besides, Monsieur was not one to bear ill-feeling."

At a very long time past, during his residence at the court, the Chevalier de Lorraine had decided, that of Louis the Thirteenth's two sons, Monsieur was the one who had inherited the father's character—an unceremonious, resolute character; impulsively good, evilly disposed at bottom; but only a cypher for his friends. He had especially cheered De Guiche

by pointing out to him that Madame would, before long, succeed in governing her husband, and that, consequently, that man would govern Monsieur who should succeed in influencing Madame. To this, De Guiche, full of mistrust and presence of mind, had replied, "Yes, chevalier ; but I believe Madame to be a very dangerous person."

"In what respect?"

"She has perceived that Monsieur is not very passionately inclined towards women."

"Quite true," said the Chevalier de Lorraine, laughing.

"In that case, Madame will choose the first one who approaches, in order to make him the object of her preference, and to bring back her husband by jealousy."—"Deep ! deep !" exclaimed the chevalier.

"But true," replied De Guiche. But neither the one nor the other expressed his real thought. De Guiche, at the very moment he thus attacked Madame's character, mentally asked her forgiveness from the bottom of his heart. The chevalier, while admiring De Guiche's penetration, led him, blindfolded, to the brink of the precipice. De Guiche then questioned him more directly upon the effect produced by the scene of that morning and upon the still more serious effect produced by the scene at dinner.

"But I have already told you they are all laughing at it," replied the Chevalier de Lorraine, "and Monsieur himself at the head of them."

"Yet," hazarded De Guiche, "I have heard that the king paid Madame a visit."

"Yes, precisely so. Madame was the only one who did not laugh, and the king went to her in order to make her laugh too."—"So that——"

"So that nothing is altered in the arrangements of the day," said the chevalier.

"And is there a repetition of the ballet this evening?"—"Certainly."

"Are you sure?"—"Quite so," returned the chevalier.

At this moment of the conversation between the two young men, Raoul entered, looking full of anxiety. As soon as the chevalier, who had a secret dislike for him, as for every other noble character, perceived him enter, he rose from his seat.

"What do you advise me to do, then?" inquired De Guiche of the chevalier.

"I advise you to go to sleep with perfect tranquillity, my dear comte."

"And my advice, De Guiche," said Raoul, "is the very opposite."

"What is that?"

"To mount your horse and set off at once for one of your estates ; on your arrival, follow the chevalier's advice, if you like ; and, what is more, you can sleep there as long and as tranquilly as you please."

"What ! set off !" exclaimed the chevalier, feigning surprise ; "why should De Guiche set off?"

"Because, and you cannot be ignorant of it—you particularly so—because everyone is talking about the scene which has passed between Monsieur and De Guiche." De Guiche turned pale.

"Not at all," replied the chevalier, "not at all, and you have been wrongly informed, M. de Bragelonne."

"I have been perfectly well informed, on the contrary, monsieur," replied Raoul, "and the advice I give De Guiche is that of a friend."

During this discussion, De Guiche, somewhat shaken, looked alternately first at one and then at the other of his advisers. He inwardly felt that game, important in all its consequences for the rest of his life, was being played at that moment.

"Is it not the fact," said the chevalier, putting the question to himself, "is it not the fact, De Guiche, the scene was not so simple?" The Vicomte de Bragelonne seems to think, and who, more than himself there :

"Whether tempestuous or not," persisted Raoul, "it is not precisely the scene itself that I am speaking, but of the consequences that may result. I know that Monsieur has threatened, and I know that Madame has been in tears."

"Madame in tears !" exclaimed De Guiche, imprudently clasping his arms round her.

"What !" said the chevalier, laughing, "this is indeed a circumstance I am not acquainted with. You are decidedly better informed than I am, Monsieur de Bragelonne."

"And it is because I am better informed than yourself, chevalier, that I am upon De Guiche leaving."

"No, no ; I regret to differ from you, vicomte ; but his departure is unnecessary. Why, indeed, should he leave ? tell us why ?"

"The king !"—"The king !" exclaimed De Guiche.

"Yes ; I tell you the king has taken up the affair."

"What !" said the chevalier, "the king likes De Guiche, and particularly so ; reflect, that, if the comte were to leave, it would be an admission that he had done something which merited rebuke."

"Why so ?"

"No doubt of it ; when one runs away, it is either from guilt or from

fear, because a man is offended ; because he is wrongfully accused," said Bragelonne. "We will assign as a reason for his departure, that he has been hurt and injured—nothing will be easier ; we will say that we both desire our utmost to keep him, and you, at least, will not be speaking other than the truth. Come, De Guiche, you are innocent, and, being so, the vicomte of to-day must have wounded you. So set off."

"No, De Guiche, remain where you are," said the chevalier ; "precisely the same Bragelonne has put it, because you are innocent. Once more, I tell you, vicomte ; but my opinion is the very opposite to your own."

"And you are at perfect liberty to maintain it, monsieur ; but be assured that the exile which De Guiche will voluntarily impose upon himself will be of short duration. He can terminate it whenever he pleases, and, returning from his voluntary exile, he will meet with smiles from all lips ; on the contrary, the anger of the king may draw down a storm upon him, the end of which no one can foresee."

The chevalier smiled, and murmured to himself, "That is the very thing I feared." And at the same time he shrugged his shoulders, a movement which did not escape the comte, who dreaded, if he quitted the court, to be exposed to a feeling of fear.

"No, no ; I have decided, Bragelonne, I stay."

"A prophesy, then," said Raoul, sadly, "that misfortune will befall you, Monsieur de Guiche."

"I am too, am a prophet, but not a prophet of evil ; on the contrary, comte, I tell you, remain."

"Are you sure," inquired De Guiche, "that the repetition of the ballet will take place ?"—"Quite sure."

"Well, you see, Raoul," continued De Guiche, endeavouring to smile, "you see the court is not so very sorrowful, or so readily disposed for intestine dissensions, when dancing is carried on with such assiduity. Come,

," said the comte to Raoul, who shook his head, saying, "I have nothing to add."

"I inquired the chevalier, curious to learn whence Raoul had obtained his information, the exactitude of which he was inwardly forced to admit, "since you say you are well informed, vicomte, how can you be better informed than myself, who am one of the prince's most intimate companions?"

"To such a declaration I submit. You certainly ought to be perfectly well informed, I admit; and, as a man of honour is incapable of saying anything but what he knows to be true, or of speaking otherwise than what he thinks, I shall say no more, but confess myself defeated, and leave you in possession of the field of battle."

Whereupon Raoul, who now seemed only to care to be left quiet, threw himself upon a large couch, while the comte summoned his servants to aid him in dressing. The chevalier, finding that time was passing away, wished to leave; but he feared, too, that Raoul, left alone with De Guiche, might yet influence him to change his resolution. He therefore made use of his last resource.

"Madame," he said, "will be brilliant; she appears to-day in her costume of Pomona."

"Yes, that is so," exclaimed the Comte.

"And she has just given directions in consequence," continued the chevalier. "You know, Monsieur de Bragelonne, that the king is to appear in Spring."

"It will be admirable," said De Guiche; "and that is a better reason for me to remain than any you have yet given, because I am to appear in Autumn, and shall have to dance with Madame. I cannot absent myself without the king's orders, since my departure would interrupt the ballet."

"I," said the chevalier, "am to be only a simple *Egyptian*; true it is, I am a bad dancer, and my legs are not well made. Gentlemen, adieu. Do not forget the basket of fruit, which you are to offer to Pomona, comte."

"Be assured," said De Guiche, delightedly, "I shall forget nothing."

"I am now quite certain that he will remain," murmured the Chevalier de Lorraine to himself.

Raoul, when the chevalier had left, did not even attempt to dissuade his friend, for he felt that it would be trouble thrown away; he merely observed to the comte, in his melancholy and melodious voice, "You are embarking in a most dangerous enterprise. I know you well: you go to extremes in everything, and she whom you love does so too. Admitting for an instant that she should at last love you——"

"Oh, never!" exclaimed De Guiche.—"Why do you say never?"

"Because it would be a great misfortune for both of us."

"In that case, instead of regarding you as simply imprudent, I cannot but consider you as absolutely mad."—"Why?"

"Are you perfectly sure, mind, answer me frankly, that you do not wish her whom you love to make any sacrifice for you?"

"Yes, yes; quite sure."

"Love her then at a distance."—"What! at a distance!"

"Certainly; what matters being present or absent, since you expect nothing from her. Love a portrait, a remembrance."—"Raoul!"

"Love a shadow, an illusion, a chimera; be devoted to the affection itself, in giving a name to your ideality."—"Ah!"

"You turn away; your servants approach; I shall say no more. In good or bad fortune, De Guiche, depend upon me."

need I shall do so."

ry well ; that is all I had to say to you. Spare no pains in your  
, De Guiche, and look your very best. Adieu."

u will not be present then at the repetition, vicomte?"

o ; I shall have a visit to pay in town. Farewell, De Guiche."

reception was to take place in the king's apartments. In the first  
there were the queens, then Madame, and a few ladies of the court  
ad been selected. A great number of courtiers, also carefully  
d, occupied the time before the dancing commenced, in conversing,  
ple knew how to converse in those times. None of the ladies who  
ceived invitations appeared in the costumes of the *fête*, as the Cheva-  
Lorraine had predicted, but many conversations took place about  
h and ingenious toilettes designed by different painters for the ballet  
he Demi-Gods," for thus were termed the kings and queens, of which  
inebleau was about to become the Pantheon. Monsieur arrived,  
g in his hand a drawing representing his character ; he looked some-  
anxious ; he bowed courteously to the young queen and his mother,  
luted Madame almost cavalierly. His notice of her and his cold-  
f manner were observed by all. M. de Guiche indemnified the  
ss by a look of passionate devotion, and it must be admitted that  
me, as she raised her eyes, returned it to him with usury. It is un-  
onable that De Guiche had never looked so handsome, for Madame's  
e had had the effect of lighting up the features of the son of the  
al de Grammont. The king's sister-in-law felt a storm mustering  
her head ; she felt, too, that, during the whole of the day, so fruit-  
future events, she had acted unjustly, if not treasonably, towards one  
oved her with such a depth of devotion. In her eyes the moment  
d to have arrived for an acknowledgment to the poor victim of the  
ce of the morning. Her heart spoke, and murmured the name of De  
e ; the comte was sincerely pitied, and accordingly gained the vic-  
ver all others. Neither Monsieur, nor the king, nor the Duke of  
ngham, was any longer thought of ; and De Guiche at that moment  
d without a rival. But although Monsieur also looked very handsome,  
e could not be compared to the comte. It is well known—indeed  
men say so—that a very wide difference invariably exists between  
ood looks of a lover and those of a husband. Besides, in the pre-  
ase, after Monsieur had left, and after the courteous and affectionate  
ition of the young queen and of the queen-mother, and the careless  
ndifferent notice of Madame, which all the courtiers had remarked ;  
ese motives gave the lover the advantage over the husband. Monsieur  
oo great a personage to notice these details. Nothing is so certain as  
settled idea of superiority to prove the inferiority of the man who  
at opinion of himself. The king arrived. Every one looked for  
might possibly happen, in the glance which began to bestir the  
, like the brow of Jupiter *Tonans*. Louis had none of his brother's  
iness, but was perfectly radiant. Having examined a greater part  
drawings which were displayed for his inspection on every side, he  
his opinion or made his remarks upon them, and in this manner  
red some happy and others unhappy by a single word. Suddenly, his  
e, which was smilingly directed towards Madame, detected the silent  
spondence which was established between the princess and the  
e. He bit his lip, but when he opened them again to utter a few  
non-place remarks, he said, advancing towards the queens :—  
have just been informed that everything is now prepared at Fontaine-

bleau, in accordance with my directions." A murmur of satisfaction arose from the different groups, and the king perceived on every face the greater anxiety to receive an invitation for the *fêtes*. "I shall leave to-morrow," he added. Whereupon the profoundest silence immediately ensued. "And I invite," said the king, finishing, "all those who are now present to get ready to accompany me."

Smiling faces were now everywhere visible, with the exception of Monsieur, who seemed to retain his ill-humour. The different noblemen and ladies of the court thereupon defiled before the king, one after the other, in order to thank his majesty for the great honour which had been conferred upon them by the invitation. When it came to De Guiche's turn the king said, "Ah ! M. de Guiche, I did not see you."

The Comte bowed, and Madame turned pale. De Guiche was about to open his lips to express his thanks, when the king said, "Comte, this is the season for farming purposes in the country ; I am sure your tenant in Normandy will be glad to see you."

The king, after this severe attack, turned his back to the poor comte, whose turn it was now to become pale ; he advanced a few steps toward the king, forgetting that the king is never spoken to except in reply to questions addressed. "I have perhaps misunderstood your majesty," he stammered out. The king turned his head slightly, and with a cold and stern glance, which plunged like a sword relentlessly into the hearts of those under disgrace, repeated, "I said retire to your estates," and allowing every syllable to fall slowly one by one. A cold perspiration bedewed the comte's face, his hands convulsively opened, and his hat, which he held between his trembling fingers, fell to the ground. Louis sought his mother's glance, as though to show her that he was master ; he sought his brother's triumphant look, as if to ask him if he were satisfied with the vengeance taken ; and lastly, his eyes fell upon Madame ; but the princess was laughing and smiling with Madame de Noailles. She had heard nothing, or rather had pretended not to hear at all. The Chevalier de Lorraine looked on also, with one of those looks of settled hostility which seem to give to a man's glance the power of a lever when it raises an obstacle, wrests it away, and casts it to a distance. M. de Guiche was left alone in the king's cabinet, the whole of the company having departed. Shadows seemed to dance before his eyes. He suddenly broke through the fixed despair which overwhelmed him, and flew to hide himself in his own rooms, where Raoul awaited him, confident in his own sad presentiments.

"Well ?" he murmured, seeing his friend enter, bareheaded, with a wild gaze and tottering gait.

"Yes, yes, it is true," said De Guiche, unable to utter more, and falling exhausted upon the couch.

"And she ?" inquired Raoul.

"She," exclaimed his unhappy friend, as he raised his hand, clenched in anger towards heaven. "She !——"

"What did she say and do ?"

"She said that her dress suited her admirably, and then she laughed. A fit of hysteric laughter seemed to shatter his nerves, for he fell backwards, completely overcome.

## CHAPTER CX.

## FONTAINEBLEAU.

FOR four days, every kind of enchantment brought together in the magnificent gardens of Fontainebleau, had converted this spot into a place of the most perfect enjoyment. M. Colbert seemed gifted with ubiquity. In the morning, there were the accounts of the previous night's expenses to settle; during the day, programmes, essays, enlistments, payments. M. Colbert had amassed four millions of francs, and dispersed them with a prudent economy. He was horrified at the expenses which mythology involved; every wood-nymph, every dryad, did not cost less than a hundred francs a day. The dress alone amounted to three hundred francs. The expense of powder and sulphur for fireworks amounted, every night, to a hundred thousand francs. In addition to these, the illuminations on the borders of the sheet of water cost thirty thousand francs every evening. The *fêtes* had been magnificent; and Colbert could not restrain his delight. From time to time, he noticed Madame and the king setting forth on hunting expeditions, or preparing for the reception of different fantastic personages, solemn ceremonies, which had been extemporised a fortnight before, and in which Madame's sparkling wit and the king's magnificence were equally displayed.

For Madame, the heroine of the *fête*, replied to the addresses of the reputations from unknown races—Garamanth's, Scythians, Hyperboreans, Caucasians, and Patagonians, who seemed to issue from the ground for the purpose of approaching her with their congratulations; and upon every representative of these races the king bestowed a diamond, or some other article of great value. Then the deputies, in verses more or less flattering, compared the king to the sun, Madame to Phœbe, the sun's sister, and the queen and Monsieur were no more spoken of than if the king had married Madame Henrietta of England, and not Maria Theresa of Austria. The happy pair, hand in hand, imperceptibly pressing each other's fingers, drank in deep draughts the sweet beverage of adulation, in which the attractions of youth, beauty, power, and love, are enhanced. Every one at Fontainebleau was amazed at the extent of the influence which Madame had so rapidly acquired over the king, and whispered among themselves, that Madame was, in point of fact, the true queen; and, in effect, the king himself proclaimed its truth by his every thought, word, and look. He formed his wishes, he drew his inspirations from Madame's eyes, and his delight was unbounded when Madame deigned to smile upon him. And was Madame, on her side, intoxicated with the power she wielded, as she beheld every one at her feet?—This was a question she herself could hardly answer; but what she did know was, that she could frame no wish, and that she felt herself to be perfectly happy. The result of all these changes, the source of which emanated from the royal will, was that Monsieur, instead of being the second person in the kingdom, had, in reality, become the third. And it was now far worse than in the time when De Guiche's guitars were heard in Madame's apartments; for, then, at least, Monsieur had the satisfaction of frightening those who annoyed him. Since the departure, however, of the enemy, he had been driven away by means of his alliance with the king, Monsieur had to submit to a burden, heavier, but in a very different sense, to the former one. Every evening, Madame returned home quite exhausted. Horse-riding, bathing in the Seine, spectacles, dinners under the leafy

covert of the trees, balls on the banks of the grand canal, concerts, etc., etc. ; all this would have been sufficient to have killed, not a slight and delicate woman, but the strongest porter in the *château*. It is perfectly true, that, with regard to dancing, concerts, and promenades, and such matters, a woman is far stronger than the most robust porter of the *château*. But, however great a woman's strength may be, there is a limit to it, and she cannot hold out long under such a system. As for Monsieur, he had not even the satisfaction of witnessing Madame's abdication of her royalty in the evening, for she lived in the royal pavilion with the young queen and the queen-mother. As a matter of course, the Chevalier de Lorraine did not quit Monsieur, and did not fail to distil his drops of gall into every wound the latter received. The result was, that Monsieur—who had at first been in the highest spirits, and completely restored since Guiche's departure—subsided into his melancholy state, three days after the court was installed at Fontainebleau. It happened, however, that one day, about two o'clock in the afternoon, Monsieur, who had risen late, and had bestowed upon his toilette more than his usual attention, it happened, we repeat, that Monsieur, who had not heard of any plans having been arranged for the day, formed the project of collecting his own court, and of carrying Madame off with him to Moret, where he possessed a charming country house. He, accordingly, went to the queen's pavilion, and was astonished, on entering, to find none of the royal servants in attendance. Quite alone, therefore, he entered the rooms, a door on the left opening to Madame's apartment, the one on the right to the young queen's. In his wife's apartment, Monsieur was informed, by a sempstress who was working there, that every one had left at eleven o'clock, for the purpose of bathing in the Seine, that a grand *fête* was to be made of the expedition, that all the carriages had been placed at the park gates, and that they had all set out more than an hour ago.

"Very good," said Monsieur ; "the idea is a good one. The heat is very oppressive, and I have no objection to bathe too."

He summoned his servants, but no one came. He summoned those in attendance on Madame, but everybody had gone out. He then went to the stables, where he was informed by a groom that there were no carriages of any description. He then desired that a couple of horses should be saddled—one for himself, and the other for his valet. The groom told him that all the horses had been sent away. Monsieur, pale with anger, again descended towards the queen's apartments, and penetrated as far as Anne of Austria's oratory, where he perceived, through the half-opened tapestry-hangings, his young and beautiful sister on her knees before the queen-mother, who appeared weeping bitterly. He had not been either seen or heard. He cautiously approached the opening, and listened, the sight of so much grief having aroused his curiosity. Not only was the young queen weeping, but she was complaining also. "Yes," she said, "the king neglects me ; the king devotes himself to pleasures and amusements only, in which I have no share."

"Patience, patience, my daughter," said Anne of Austria, in Spanish ; and then, also in Spanish, added some words of advice, which Monsieur did not understand. The queen replied by accusations, mingled with sighs and sobs, among which Monsieur often distinguished the word *banos*, which Maria Theresa accentuated with spiteful anger.

"The baths," said Monsieur to himself, "it seems it is the baths that have put her out." And he endeavoured to put together the disconnected

cases which he had been able to understand. It was easy to guess that the queen complained bitterly, and that, if Anne of Austria did not console her; she at least endeavoured to do so. Monsieur was afraid to be detected eavesdropping at the door, and he therefore made up his mind to cough; the two queens turned round at the sound, and Monsieur entered. At the sight of the prince, the young queen rose precipitately, and dried her tears. Monsieur, however, knew the people he had to deal with too well, and was naturally too polite to remain silent, and he accordingly saluted them. The queen-mother smiled pleasantly at him, saying, "What do you want, Philip?"

"I?—nothing," stammered Monsieur; "I was looking for——"

"Whom?"

"I was looking for Madame."—"Madame is at the baths."

"And the king?" said Monsieur, in a tone which made the queen smile.

"The king also, and the whole court as well," replied Anne of Austria.

"Except you, madame," said Monsieur.

"Oh, I," said the young queen—"I seem to terrify all those who amuse themselves." Anne of Austria made a sign to her daughter-in-law, who withdrew, weeping.

Monsieur's brows contracted as he remarked aloud, "What a cheerless house! What do you think of it, mother?"

"Why, no; everybody here is pleasure-hunting."

"Yes, indeed; that is the very thing that makes those dull who do not care for pleasure."

"In what a tone you say that, Philip!"

"Upon my word, madame, I speak as I think."

"Explain yourself. What is the matter?"

"Ask my sister-in-law rather, who just now was detailing all her grievances to you."—"Her grievances! What——"

"Yes, I was listening—accidentally, I confess, but still I listened; so that I heard only too well my sister complain of those famous baths of Madame."—"What folly!"

"No, no, no; people are not always foolish when they weep. The queen said *banos*, which means baths."

"I repeat, Philip," said Anne of Austria, "that your sister is most childishly jealous."

"In that case, madame," replied the prince, "I too must, with great civility, accuse myself of possessing the same defect as she has."

"You also, Philip?"—"Certainly."

"Are you really jealous of these baths?"

"And why not, madame, when the king goes to the baths with my wife, and does not take the queen? Why not, when Madame goes to the baths with the king, and does not do me the honour to tell me of it? And you require my sister-in-law to be satisfied, and require me to be satisfied too."

"You are raving, my dear Philip," said Anne of Austria; "you have given the Duke of Buckingham away; you have been the cause of Monsieur de Guiche's exile; do you now wish to send the king away from Fontainebleau?"

"I do not pretend to anything of the kind, madame," said Monsieur, "but, at least, I can withdraw, and I shall do so."

"Jealous of the king—jealous of your brother?"

"Yes, madame, I am jealous of the king—of my own brother, and very jealous too."

"Really, Monsieur," exclaimed Anne of Austria, affecting to be indignant and angry, "I begin to believe you are mad, and a sworn enemy to my repose. I therefore abandon the place to you, for I have no means of defending myself against such wild conceptions."

She arose and left Monsieur a prey to the most extravagant transport of passion. He remained for a moment completely bewildered; then, recovering himself, he again went to the stables, found the groom, once more asked him for a carriage or a horse, and, upon his replying that there was neither the one nor the other, Monsieur snatched a long whip from the hand of a stable-boy, and began to pursue the poor devil of a groom all round the servants' courtyard, whipping him all the while, in spite of his cries and his excuses; then, quite out of breath, covered with perspiration, and trembling in every limb, he returned to his own apartments, broke in pieces some beautiful specimens of porcelain, and then got into bed, booted and spurred as he was, crying out for some one to come to him.

## CHAPTER CXI.

### THE BATH.

AT Valvins, beneath the impenetrable shade of flowering osiers and willows, which, as they bent down their green heads, dipped the extremities of their branches in the blue waters, a long and flat-bottomed boat, with ladders covered with long blue curtains, served as a refuge for the bathing Dianas, who, as they left the water, were watched by twenty plumed Acteons, who, eagerly, and full of desire, galloped up and down the moss-grown and perfumed banks of the river. But Diana herself, even the chaste Diana, clothed in her long chlamys, was less beautiful—less impenetrable, than Madame, as young and beautiful as that goddess herself. For, notwithstanding the fine tunic of the huntress, her round and delicate knee can be seen; and, notwithstanding the sonorous quiver, her brown shoulders can be detected; whereas, in Madame's case, a long white veil enveloped her, wrapping her round and round a hundred times, as she resigned herself into the hands of her female attendants, and thus was rendered inaccessible to the most indiscreet, as well as to the most penetrating gaze. When she ascended the ladder, the poets who were present—and all were poets when Madame was the subject of discussion—twenty poets who were galloping about, stopped, and with one voice exclaimed, that pearls, and not drops of water, were falling from her person, to be lost again in the happy river. The king, the centre of these effusions, and of this respectful homage, imposed silence upon those exulting actors, for whom it seemed impossible to exhaust their raptures, and he rode away, from fear of offending, even under the silken curtains, the modesty of the woman and the dignity of the princess. A great blank thereupon ensued on the scene, and a perfect silence in the boat. From the movements on board,—from the flutterings and agitations of the curtains,—tho' goings to and fro of the female attendants engaged in their duties, could be guessed.

The king smilingly listened to the conversation of the courtiers around him, but it could easily be perceived that he gave but little, if any, attention to their remarks. In fact, hardly had the sound of the rings drawn along the curtain-rods announced that Madame was dressed, and that the goddess was about to make her appearance, than the king, returning to his former post immediately, and running quite close to the river-bank, gav-

the signal for all those to approach whose attendance or pleasure summoned them to Madame's side. The pages hurried forward, conducting the led horses; the carriages, which had remained sheltered under the trees, advanced towards the tent, followed by a crowd of servants, bearers, and female attendants who, while their masters had been bathing, had mutually exchanged their own observations, their critical remarks, and the discussion of matters personal to themselves,—the fugitive journal of that period, of which no record is preserved, not even by the waters, the mirror of individuals, echoes of conversations, witnesses whom Heaven has hurried into immensity, as he has hurried the actors themselves into eternity. A crowd of people swarming upon the banks of the river, without reckoning the groups of peasants drawn together by their anxiety to see the king and the princess, was, for many minutes, the most disorderly, but the most agreeable, pell-mell imaginable. The king dismounted from his horse, a movement which was imitated by all the courtiers, and offered his hand to Madame, whose rich riding-habit displayed her fine figure, which was set off to great advantage by that garment, made of fine woollen cloth, embroidered with silver. Her hair still damp and blacker than jet, hung in heavy masses upon her white and delicate neck. Joy and health sparkled in her beautiful eyes; composed, and yet full of energy, she inhaled the air in deep draughts, under the embroidered parasol, which was borne by one of her pages. Nothing could be more charming, more graceful, more poetical, than these two figures buried under the rose-coloured shade of the parasol; the king, whose white teeth were displayed in continual smiles, and Madame, whose black eyes sparkled like two carbuncles in the glittering reflection of the changing hues of the silk. When Madame had approached her horse, a magnificent animal of Andalusian breed, of spotless white, somewhat heavy, perhaps, but with a spirited and slender head, in which the mixture so happily combined of Arabian and Spanish blood could be readily traced, and whose long tail swept the ground; and as the princess affected difficulty in mounting, the king took her in his arms in such a manner that Madame's arm was clasped like a circlet of ore around the king's neck; Louis, as he withdrew, involuntarily touched with his lips the arm, which was not withheld, and the princess having thanked her royal equerry, every one sprang to his saddle at the same moment. The king and Madame drew aside to allow the carriages, the outriders, and runners, to pass by. A fair proportion of the cavaliers, released from the restraint which etiquette had imposed upon them, gave the rein to their horses, and darted after the carriages which bore the aids of honour, as blooming as so many Oreades around Diana, and the whirlwind, laughing, chattering, and noisy, passed onward.

The king and Madame, however, kept their horses in hand at a footpace. Behind his majesty and his sister-in-law, certain of the courtiers—those, at least, who were seriously disposed, or were anxious to be within reach, or under the eyes of the king—followed at a respectful distance, restraining their impatient horses, regulating their pace by that of the king and Madame, and abandoned themselves to all the delight and gratification which is to be found in the conversation of clever people, who can, with perfect courtesy, make a thousand of the most atrocious remarks about their neighbours. In their stifled laughter, and in the little reticences of their sardonic humour, Monsieur, the poor absentee, was not spared. But they pitied, and bewailed greatly, the fate of De Guiche; and it must be confessed that their compassion, as far as he was concerned, was not misplaced. The king and Madame having breathed their horses,

and repeated a hundred times over such remarks as the courtiers, who made them talk, had suggested to them, set off at a hand-gallop, and the shady coverts of the forest resounded to the heavy footfall of the mounted party. To the conversations beneath the shade of trees,—to the remarks made in the shape of confidential communications, and to the observations which had been mysteriously exchanged, succeeded the noisiest bursts of laughter ;—from the very outriders to royalty itself, merriment seemed to spread. Every one began to laugh and to cry out. The maples and the jays flew away, uttering their guttural cries, beneath the waving avenues of the oaks ; the cuckoo stayed his monotonous cry in the recesses of the forest ; the chaffinch and tomtit flew away in clouds while the terrified fawn, and other deer, bounded forwards from the midst of the thickets. This crowd, spreading wildly joy, confusion and light wherever it passed, was preceded, it may be said, to the *château* by its own clamour. As the king and Madame entered the village, they were both received by the general acclamations of the crowd. Madame hastened to look for Monsieur, for she instinctively understood that he had been far too long kept from sharing in this joy. The king went to rejoin the queens, he knew he owed them—one especially—a compensation for his long absence. But Madame was not admitted to Monsieur's apartments, and she was informed that Monsieur was asleep. The king, instead of being met by Maria Theresa smiling, as was usual with her, found Anne of Austria in the gallery, watching for his return, who advanced to meet him, and taking him by the hand, led him to her own apartment. No one ever knew what was the nature of the conversation which took place between them, or rather what it was that the queen-mother had said to Louis XIV. ; but it certainly might easily be guessed from the annoyed expression of the king's face as he left her after the interview.

But we, whose mission it is to interpret all things, as it is also to communicate our interpretations to our readers—we should fail in our duty if we were to leave them in ignorance of the result of this interview. It will be found sufficiently detailed—at least we hope so—in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER CXII.

### THE BUTTERFLY-CHASE.

THE king, on retiring to his apartments to give some directions and to arrange his ideas, found on his toilette-glass a small note, the handwriting of which seemed disguised. He opened it and read—"Come quickly, I have a thousand things to say to you." The king and Madame had not been separated a sufficiently long time for these thousand things to be the result of the three thousand which they had been saying to each other during the route which separated Valvins from Fontainebleau. The confused and hurried character of the note gave the king a great deal to reflect upon. He occupied himself but slightly with his toilette, and set off to pay his visit to Madame. The princess, who did not wish to have the appearance of expecting him, had gone into the gardens with the ladies of her suite. When the king was informed that Madame had left her apartments, and had gone for a walk in the gardens, he collected all the gentlemen he could find, and invited them to follow him. He found Madame engaged in chasing butterflies, on a large lawn bordered with heliotropes and flowering broom. She was looking on, as the most adventurous and

gest of her ladies ran to and fro, and with her back turned to a high e, very impatiently awaited the arrival of the king, to whom she had the rendezvous. The sound of many feet upon the gravel-walk made urn round. Louis XIV. was bareheaded ; he had struck down with his a peacock butterfly, which Monsieur de Saint-Aignan had picked up the ground quite stunned.

"You see, Madame," said the king, as he approached her, "that I, too, untling for you ;" and then, turning towards those who had accompa-him, said, "Gentlemen, see if each of you cannot obtain as much for ladies," a remark which was a signal for all to retire. And thereupon ous spectacle might be observed ; old and corpulent courtiers were running after butterflies, losing their hats as they ran, and with their d canes cutting down the myrtles and the furze, as they would have the Spaniards.

The king offered Madame his arm, and they both selected, as the centre servation, a bench with a roofing of moss, a kind of hut roughly designed e modest genius of one of the gardeners who had inaugurated the pictu-e and the fanciful amid the formal style of gardening of that period. sheltered retreat, covered with nasturtiums and climbing roses, ned a bench, as it were, so that the spectators, insulated in the middle e lawn, saw and were seen on every side, but could not be heard, out perceiving those who might approach for the purpose of listening. ed thus, the king made a sign of encouragement to those who were ing about ; and then, as if he were engaged with Madame in a disser- upon the butterfly, which he had thrust through with a gold pin and ed on his hat, said to her, "How admirably we are placed here for rsation."

"Yes, sire, for I wished to be heard by you alone, and yet to be seen ery one"—"And I also," said Louis.

"My note surprised you?"

"Terrified me, rather. But what I have to tell you is more important." t cannot be, sire. Do you know that Monsieur refuses to see me?"

"Why so?"—"Can you not guess why?"

"Ah, Madame ! in that case we have both the same thing to say to each

"What has happened to you, then?"

"You wish me to begin?"—"Yes, for I have told you all."

"Well, then, as soon as I returned, I found my mother waiting for me, he led me away to her own apartments."

"The queen mother?" said Madame, with some anxiety, "the matter is is, then?"

"Indeed it is, for she told me . . . but, in the first place, allow me to ce what I have to say with one remark. Has Monsieur ever spoken about me?"—"Often."

"Has he ever spoken to you about his jealousy?"

"More frequently still."

"Of his jealousy of me?"

"No, but of the duke of Buckingham and De Guiche."

"Well, Madame, Monsieur's present idea is a jealousy of myself."

"Really," replied the princess, smiling archly.

"And it really seems to me," continued the king, "that we have never any ground—"

"Never ! at least I have not. But who told you that Monsieur was is?"

"My mother represented to me that Monsieur entered her apartment like a madman, that he had uttered a thousand complaints against you, and—forgive me for saying it—against your coquetry. It appears that Monsieur indulges in injustice, too."

"You are very kind, sire."

"My mother reassured him ; but he pretended that people reassure him too often, and that he had had quite enough of it."

"Would it not be better for him not to make himself uneasy in any way ?"

"The very thing I said."

"Confess, sire, that the world is very wicked. Is it possible that brother and sister cannot converse together, or take pleasure in each other's society, without giving rise to remarks and suspicions ? For indeed, sire, we are doing no harm, and have no intention of doing any. And she looked at the king with that proud and provoking glance which kindles desire in the coldest and wisest of men."

"No !" sighed the king, "that is true."

"You know very well, sire, that if it were to continue, I should be obliged to make a disturbance. Do you decide upon our conduct, and say whether it has, or has not, been perfectly correct."

"Oh certainly, perfectly correct."

"Often alone together,—for we delight in the same things, we might possibly be led away into error, but have we done so ? I regard you as a brother, and nothing more." The king frowned. She continued :

"Your hand, which often meets my own, does not excite in me that agitation and emotion which is the case with those who love each other for instance——"

"Enough," said the king, "enough, I entreat you. You have no pity—you are killing me."

"What is the matter ?"

"In fact, then, you distinctly say you experience nothing when near me."

"Oh, sire ! I do not say that—my affection——"

"Enough, Henrietta, I again entreat you. If you believe me to be marble, as you are, undeceive yourself."

"I do not understand you, sire."

"Very well," sighed the king, casting down his eyes. "And so our meetings, the pressure of each other's hand, the looks we have exchanged——Yes, yes ; you are right, and I understand your meaning," and he buried his face in his hands.

"Take care, sire," said Madame, hurriedly, "Monsieur de Saint-Aignan is looking at you."

"Of course," said Louis, angrily ; "never even the shadow of liberty, never any sincerity in my intercourse with any one ! I imagine I have found a friend, who is nothing but a spy ;—a dearer friend, who is only a—sister !"

Madame was silent, and cast down her eyes. "My husband is jealous," she murmured in a tone of which nothing could equal its sweetness and its charm.

"You are right," exclaimed the king, suddenly.

"You see," she said, looking at him in a manner that set his heart on fire, "you are free, you are not suspected, the peace of your house is not disturbed."

"Alas !" said the king, "as yet you know nothing, for the queen is jealous."

"Maria Theresa !"

perfectly mad with jealousy! Monsieur's jealousy arises from hers; as weeping and complaining to my mother, and was reproaching us those bathing parties, which have made me so happy." "And me too," answered Madame by a look. "Then, suddenly," continued the king, "Monsieur, - the word '*banos*,' which the queen pronounced with a degree of coquetry, that awakened his attention; he entered the room, and, in a moment, broke into the conversation, and began to quarrel with me so bitterly, that she was obliged to leave him; so that, with my jealous husband to deal with, I shall have perpetually presented to me a spectre of jealousy with swollen eyes, a cadaverous face, and ghastly looks."

"Poor king," murmured Madame, as she lightly touched the king's hand. He retained her hand in his, and, in order to pass it without excitation or suspicion in the spectators, who were not so much taken up with the butterflies that they could not occupy themselves about other matters, he perceived clearly enough that there was some mystery in the king's and Madame's conversation, Louis placed the dying butterfly before the king's sister-in-law, and both bent over it as if to count the thousand eyes of the butterfly, or the particles of golden dust which covered it. Neither of them spoke; however, their hair mingled, their breath united, and their hearts feverishly throbbed in each other's grasp. Five minutes passed by in this manner.

### CHAPTER CXIII.

WHAT WAS CAUGHT IN THE HAND AFTER THE BUTTERFLIES.

Two young people remained for a moment with their heads bent down, as it were, beneath the double thought of the love which was springing up in their hearts, and which gives birth to so many happy ideas in the imaginations of twenty years of age. Madame Henrietta cast a side glance, from time to time, at the king. Hers was one of those well-organised natures capable of looking inwardly at itself, as well as at others at the same moment. She perceived love lying at the bottom of her heart, as a skilful diver sees a pearl at the bottom of the sea. She perceived Louis was hesitating, if not in doubt, and that his indolent or timid nature required aid and encouragement. "Consequently?" she said, interjectively, breaking the silence.

"What do you mean?" inquired Louis, after a moment's pause.

"I mean, that I shall be obliged to return to the resolution I had taken."

"To what resolution?"

"To that which I have already submitted to your majesty."—"When?" "On the very day we had a certain explanation about Monsieur's business."

"What did you say to me then?" inquired Louis, with some anxiety.

"Do you not remember, sire?"

"Alas! if it be another cause of unhappiness, I shall recollect it soon enough."

"A cause of unhappiness for myself alone, sire," replied Madame Henrietta; "but as it is necessary, I must submit to it."

"At least, tell me what it is," said the king.—"Absence."

"Still that unkind resolve?"

"Believe me, sire, I have not formed it without a violent struggle with myself; it is absolutely necessary I should return to England."

"Never, never will I permit you to leave France," exclaimed the king.

"And yet, sire," said Madame, affecting a gentle yet sorrowful determination, "nothing is more urgently necessary; nay, more than that, I am persuaded it is your mother's desire I should do so."

"Desire" exclaimed the king; "that is a very strange expression to use too."

"All," replied Madame Henrietta, smilingly, "are you not happy in submitting to the wishes of so good a mother?"

"Enough, I implore you; you rend my very soul."

"I?"—"Yes; for you speak of your departure with tranquillity."

"I was not born for happiness, sire," replied the princess, dejectedly "and I acquired, in very early life, the habit of seeing my dearest thoughts disappointed."

"Do you speak truly?" said the king. "Would your departure gainsay any one of your cherished thoughts?"

"If I were to say 'yes,' would you begin to take your misfortune patiently?"

"How cruel you are!"—"Take care, sire; some one is coming."

The king looked all round him, and said, "No, there is no one," and then continued: "Come, Henrietta, instead of trying to contend against Monsieur's jealousy by a departure which would kill me——" Henrietta slightly shrugged her shoulders, like a woman unconvinced. "Yes," repeated Louis, "which would kill me, I say. Instead of fixing your mind on this departure, does not your imagination—or rather, does not your heart—suggest some expedient?"

"What is it you wish my heart to suggest?"

"Tell me, how can one prove to another that it is wrong to be jealous?"

"In the first place, sire, by giving no motive for jealousy; in other words, in loving no one but the one in question."

"Oh! I expected better than that."—"What did you expect?"

"That you would simply tell me that jealous people are pacified by concealing the affection which is entertained for the object of their jealousy."

"Dissimulation is difficult, sire."

"Yet, it is only by means of conquering difficulties, that any happiness is attained. As far as I am concerned, I swear I will give the lie to those who are jealous of me, by pretending to treat you like any other woman."

"A bad as well as an unsafe means," said the young princess, shaking her pretty head.

"You seem to think everything bad, dear Henrietta," said Louis, discontentedly. "You destroy everything I propose. Suggest, at least, something else in its stead. Come, try and think. I trust implicitly to a woman's invention. Do you invent, in your turn."

"Well, sire, I have hit upon something. Will you listen to it?"

"Can you ask me? You speak of a matter of life or death to me, and then ask if I will listen."

"Well, I judge of it by my own case. If my husband intended to put me on the wrong scent with regard to another woman, one thing would reassure me more than anything else."

"What would that be?"

"In the first place, to see that he never took any notice of the woman in question."

ore wish to draw up a complete plan of attack, for you know, that  
 der passion is subdivided in a variety of ways. Well, then, I shall  
 the village of Little Attentions, at the hamlet of Love-Letters,  
 follow the road of Visible Affection ; the way is clear enough you  
 and poor Madame de Scudéry would never forgive me for passing  
 a halting place without stopping."

! now we have returned to our proper senses, shall we say adieu,

s ! it must be so, for, see, we are interrupted."

, indeed," said Madame Henrietta, "they are bringing Mademoi-  
 Tonny-Charente and her sphinx butterfly in grand procession  
 y."

s perfectly well understood, then, that this evening during the pro-  
 e, I am to make my escape into the forest, and finding La Vallière  
 you."

ill take care to send her away."

ry well ! I will speak to her when she is with her companions, and  
 then discharge my first arrow at her."

skilful," said Madame, laughing, "and do not miss the heart."

the princess took leave of the king, and went forward to meet the  
 troop, which was advancing with much ceremony, and a great  
 pretended flourishes of trumpets, which they imitated with their

## CHAPTER CXIV.

### THE BALLET OF THE SEASONS.

conclusion of the banquet, which had been served at five o'clock,  
 ng entered his cabinet, where his tailors were awaiting him, for the  
 e of trying on the celebrated costume representing Spring, which  
 he result of so much imagination, and had cost so many efforts of  
 it to the designers and ornament-workers of the court. As for the  
 itself, every person knew the part he had to take in it, and how to  
 m that part. The king had resolved to make it a matter of surprise.  
 y, therefore, had he finished his conference, and entered his own  
 ment, than he desired his two masters of the ceremonies, Villeroy and  
 Aignan to be sent for. Both replied that they only awaited his  
 , and that everything was ready to begin, but that it was necessary to  
 fine weather and a favourable night before those orders could be  
 d out. The king opened his window ; the golden hues of evening  
 be seen in the horizon through the vistas of the wood, and the  
 white as snow, was already visible in the heavens. Not a ripple  
 be noticed on the surface of the green waters ; the swans them-  
 even, reposing with folded wings like ships at anchor, seemed pene-  
 by the warmth of the air, the freshness of the water, and the silence  
 beautiful evening. The king, having observed all these things, and  
 mpleted the magnificent picture before him, gave the order which  
 lleroy and De Saint-Aignan awaited ; but, with the view of ensuring  
 ecution of this order in a royal manner, one last question was neces-  
 and Louis XIV. put it to the two gentlemen, in the following manner :  
 ave you any money ?"

ire," replied Saint-Aignan, "we have arranged everything with M.  
 rt.—"Ah ! very well !"

"Yes, sire, and M. Colbert said he would wait upon your majesty soon as your majesty should manifest an intention of carrying *fêtes*, of which he has furnished the programme."

"Let him come in, then," said the king; and as if Colbert had been listening at the door for the purpose of keeping himself *au courant* of the conversation, he entered as soon as the king had pronounced his name before the two courtiers.

"Ah; M. Colbert," said the king. "Gentlemen, to your posts;" and upon Saint-Aignan and Villeroy took their leave. The king seated himself in an easy chair near the window, saying: "The ballet will take place this evening, M. Colbert."

"In that case, sire, I settle the accounts to-morrow."—"Why so?"

"I promised the tradespeople to pay their bills the following day, on which the ballet should take place."

"Very well, M. Colbert, pay them, since you have promised to do so."

"Certainly, sire; but I must have money to do that."

"What! have not the four millions, which M. Fouquet promised to send? I had forgotten to ask you about it."

"Sire, they were sent at the hour promised."—"Well?"

"Well, sire, the coloured lamps, the fireworks, the musicians, and the cooks have swallowed up four millions in eight days."—"Entirely?"

"To the last penny. Every time your majesty directed the bank to illuminate the grand canal to be illuminated, as much oil was consumed as there was water in the basins."

"Well, well, M. Colbert; the fact is, then, you have no more money."

"I have no more, sire, but M. Fouquet has," Colbert replied, his face darkening with a sinister expression of pleasure.

"What do you mean?" inquired Louis.

"We have already made M. Fouquet advance six millions. He has given them with too much grace, not to have others still to give, if they are required, which is the case at the present moment. It is necessary, therefore, that he should comply."

The king frowned. "M. Colbert," said he, accentuating the financier's name, "that is not the way I understood the matter; I do not wish to make use, against any of my servants, of a means of pressure which might oppress him and fetter his services. In eight days, M. Fouquet has furnished six millions, that is a good sum."

Colbert turned pale. "And yet," he said, "your majesty did not utter this language some time ago, when the news about Belle-Isle arrived, for instance."—"You are right, M. Colbert."

"Nothing, however, has changed since then; on the contrary, indeed."

"In my thoughts, monsieur, everything is changed."

"Does your majesty, then, no longer believe the attempts?"

"My own affairs concern me alone, monsieur; and I have already told you I transact them myself."

"Then, I perceive," said Colbert, trembling from anger and from fear, "that I have had the misfortune to fall into disgrace with your majesty."

"Not at all; you are, on the contrary, most agreeable to me."

"Yet, sire," said the minister, with a certain affected bluntness, so successful when it was a question of flattering Louis' self-esteem, "what use is there in being agreeable to your majesty, if one can no longer be of any to you?"

"I reserve your services for a better occasion; and, believe me, they will only be the better appreciated."

"Your majesty's plan, then, in this affair, is——"

"You want money, M. Colbert?"

"Seven hundred thousand francs, sire."

"You will take them from my private treasure." Colbert bowed. "Well," added Louis, "as it seems a difficult matter for you, notwithstanding your economy, to defray, with so limited a sum, the expenses which I had to incur, I will at once sign an order for three millions."

The king took a pen and signed an order immediately, then handed it to Colbert. "Be satisfied, M. Colbert, the plan I have adopted is one worthy of a king," said Louis XIV., who pronounced these words with the assurance that his majesty knew how to assume in such circumstances; and he dismissed Colbert for the purpose of giving an audience to his tailors.

The order issued by the king was known in the whole of Fontainebleau; it was already known, too, that the king was trying on his costume, and that the ballet would be danced in the evening. The news circulated with the rapidity of lightning; during its progress it kindled every variety of passion, coquetry, desire, and wild ambition. At the same moment, as if by enchantment, every one who knew how to hold a needle, every one who could distinguish a coat from a pair of trousers, was summoned to the assistance of those who had received invitation. The king had completed his toilette at nine o'clock; he appeared in an open carriage decorated with garlands of branches of trees and flowers. The queens had taken their seats on a magnificent dais or platform, erected upon the borders of the theatre, in a theatre of wonderful elegance of construction. In the space of a few hours the carpenters had put together all the different parts connected with the theatre; the upholsterers had laid down the carpets, upholstered the seats; and, as if at the signal of an enchanter's wand, a hundred hands, instead of interfering with each other, had concerted the building on this spot amidst the sound of music; whilst, at the same time, other workmen illuminated the theatre and the shores of the lake with an incalculable number of lamps. As the heavens, set with stars, were perfectly unclouded, as not even a breath of air could be heard in the woods, and as if nature herself had yielded complacently to the king's fancies, the back of the theatre had been left open; so that, and the foreground of the scenes, could be seen as a background the beautiful sky, glittering with stars; the sheet of water, illumined by the stars which were reflected in it; and the bluish outline of the grand old oaks of woods, with their rounded tops. When the king made his appearance, the whole theatre was full, and presented to the view one great group, dazzling with gold and precious stones; in which, however, at the first glance, no one single face could be distinguished. By degrees, as the sight became accustomed to so much brilliancy, the rarest beauties appeared to the view, as in the evening sky the stars appear one by one to the eye when one closes his eyes and then opens them again.

The theatre represented a grove of trees: a few fauns lifting up their feet, were jumping about; a dryad made her appearance on the stage, and was immediately pursued by them; others gathered round her for defence, and they quarrelled as they danced. Suddenly, for the purpose of restoring peace and order, Spring, accompanied by his whole retinue, made his appearance. The Elements, the subaltern powers of mythology, together with their attributes, precipitated themselves upon the stage of their gracious sovereign. The Seasons, the allies of Spring, followed him closely to form a quadrille, which, after many words of more or less flattering import, was the commencement of the dance. The music,

hautboys, flutes, and viols, were descriptive of the rural delights. The king had already made his appearance, amid thunders of applause. He was dressed in a tunic of flowers, which set off his easy and well-formed figure to advantage. His legs, the best-shaped at the court, were also displayed to great advantage in flesh-coloured silken hose, of silk so fine and so transparent that it seemed almost like flesh itself. The most beautiful pale-lilac satin shoes, with bows of flowers and leaves, imprisoned his small feet. The bust of the figure was in harmonious keeping with the base; the waving hair was floating on his shoulders, the freshness of his complexion was enhanced by the brilliancy of his beautiful blue eyes, which softly kindled all hearts; a mouth with tempting lips, which delighted to open in smiles.—Such was the prince of the period, who had that evening been justly named “The King of all the Loves.” There was something in his carriage which resembled the buoyant movements of an immortal, and he did not dance so much as seem to soar along. His entrance had produced, therefore, the most brilliant effect. Suddenly the Comte de Saint-Aignan was observed endeavouring to approach either the king or Madame.

The princess—who was clothed in a long dress, diaphanous and light as the finest network tissue from the hands of the skilful Mechlin workers, her knee occasionally revealed beneath the folds of the tunic, and her little feet encased in silken shoes—advanced, radiant with beauty, accompanied by her *cortège* of Bacchantes, and had already reached the spot which had been assigned to her in the dance. The applause continued so long that the comte had ample leisure to join the king.

“What is the matter, Saint-Aignan?” said Spring.

“Nothing whatever,” replied the courtier, as pale as death; “but your majesty has not thought of the Fruits.”

“Yes; it is suppressed.”

“Far from it, sire; your majesty having given no directions about it, the musicians have retained it.”

“How excessively annoying,” said the king. “This figure cannot be performed, since M. de Guiche is absent. It must be suppressed.”

“Oh, sire, a quarter of an hour’s music without any dancing will produce an effect so chilling as to ruin the success of the ballet.”

“But, comte, since——”

“Oh, sire, that is not the greatest misfortune; for, after all, the orchestra could still just as well cut it out, if it were necessary; but——”

“But what?”——“Why, M. de Guiche is here.”

“Here?” replied the king, frowning, “here? Are you sure?”

“Yes, sire; and ready-dressed for the ballet.”

The king felt himself colour deeply, and said, “You are probably mistaken.”

“So little is that the case, sire, that if your majesty will look to the right you will see that the comte is waiting.”

Louis turned hastily towards the side, and in fact, on his right, brilliant in his character of Autumn, De Guiche awaited until the king should look at him, in order that he might address him. To describe the stupefaction of the king, that of Monsieur, who was moving about restlessly in his box—to describe also the agitated movement of the heads in the theatre and the strange emotion of Madame, at the sight of her partner, is a task we must leave to more able hands. The king stood almost motionless with astonishment as he looked at the comte, who, bowing lowly, approached his majesty with the profoundest respect.

“he,” he said, “your majesty’s most devoted servant approaches to  
 to a service on this occasion with similar zeal to that he has already  
 on the field of battle. Your majesty, in omitting the dance of the  
 would be losing the most beautiful scene in the ballet. I did not  
 be the cause of so great a prejudice to your majesty’s elegance,  
 and graceful address ; and I have left my tenants in order to place  
 at your majesty’s commands.”

His word fell distinctly, in perfect harmony and eloquence upon  
 the king’s ears. Their flattery pleased, as much as De Guiche’s  
 he had astonished him, and he simply replied, “I did not tell you to  
 come.”

Certainly not, sire, but your majesty did not tell me to remain.”  
 The king perceived that time was passing away, that if the scene were  
 prolonged it might complicate everything, and that a single cloud upon  
 the picture would effectually spoil the whole. Besides, the king’s heart  
 filled with two or three new ideas : he had just derived fresh inspira-  
 tion from the eloquent glances of Madame. Her look had said to him,  
 “they are jealous of you, divide their suspicions, for the man who  
 divides two rivals does not distrust either in particular.” So that Madame,  
 his clever diversion, decided him. The king smiled upon De Guiche,  
 did not comprehend a word of Madame’s dumb language, but only  
 remarked that she pretended not to look at him, and he attributed the  
 in which had been conferred upon him to the princess’s kindness of

The king seemed pleased with every one present. Monsieur was  
 only one who did not understand anything about the matter. The  
 began ; the effect was more than beautiful. When the music, by  
 its soft melody, carried away these illustrious dancers, when the  
 simple, untutored pantomime of that period, far more so on account of  
 every indifferent acting of the august actors, had reached its culminat-  
 ing point of triumph, the theatre almost shook with the tumultuous ap-  
 plause.

De Guiche shone like a sun, but like a courtly sun, which is resigned  
 to a subordinate part. Disdainful of a success of which Madame showed  
 no acknowledgment, he thought of nothing but of boldly regaining the  
 preference of the princess. She, however, did not bestow a single  
 glance upon him. By degrees all his happiness, all his brilliancy subsided  
 in regret and uneasiness ; so that his limbs lost their power, his arms  
 drooped heavily by his side, and his head seemed stupefied. The king, who  
 from this moment became in reality the principal dancer in the quad-  
 rangle, cast a look upon his vanquished rival. De Guiche soon ceased to  
 play even the character of the courtier : without applause, he danced  
 silently, and very soon could not dance at all, by which means the  
 triumph of the king and of Madame was assured.

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## CHAPTER CXV.

### THE NYMPHS OF THE PARK OF FONTAINEBLEAU.

The king remained for a moment to enjoy a triumph which was as com-  
 plete as it could possibly be. He then turned towards Madame, for the  
 sake of admiring her also, a little, in her turn. Young persons love  
 more vivacity, perhaps with greater ardour and deeper passion, than  
 those more advanced in years ; but all the other feelings are at the same  
 time developed in proportion to their youth and vigour ; so that vanity

being with them almost always the equivalent of love, the latter feeling according to the laws of equipoise, never attains that degree of perfection which it acquires in men and women from thirty to five-and-thirty years of age. Louis thought of Madame, but only after he had carefully thought of himself; and Madame carefully thought of herself, without bestowing single thought upon the king. The victim, however, of all these royal affections and vanities, was poor De Guiche. Everyone could observe his agitation, his prostration—a prostration which was, indeed, the more remarkable, as people were not accustomed to see him with his arms hanging listless at his side, his head bewildered, and his eyes with their bright intelligence gone. It rarely happened that any uneasiness was excited on his account, whenever a question of elegance or taste was under discussion, and De Guiche's defeat was accordingly attributed by the greater number present to his courtier-like tact and ability. But there were others—keen-sighted observers are always to be met with at court—who remarked his pale face and his altered looks, which he could neither feign nor conceal; and the conclusion was, that De Guiche was not acting the part of a flatterer. These sufferings, successes, and remarks, were blended, confounded, and lost in the uproar of applause. When, however, the queens had expressed their satisfaction and the spectators their enthusiasm, when the king had retired to his dressing-room to change his costume, and whilst Monsieur, dressed as a woman, as he delighted to be, was, in his turn, dancing about De Guiche, who had now recovered himself, approached Madame, who, seated at the back of the theatre, was waiting for the second part, and had quitted the others for the purpose of creating a sort of solitude for herself in the midst of the crowd, to meditate, as it were, beforehand, upon chorographic effects; and it will be perfectly understood that, absorbed in deep meditation, she did not see, or rather she pretended not to see, anything that was passing around her. De Guiche, observing that she was alone near a thicket constructed of painted cloth, approached her. Two of her maids of honour, dressed as hamadryads, seeing De Guiche advance, drew back out of respect, whereupon De Guiche proceeded towards the middle of the circle and saluted her royal highness; but, whether she did or did not observe his salutation, the princess did not even turn her head. A cold shiver passed through poor De Guiche; he was unprepared for such utter indifference, for he had neither seen nor been told of anything that had taken place, and consequently could guess nothing. Remarkable therefore, that his obeisance obtained him no acknowledgment, he advanced one step further, and in a voice which he tried, though uselessly, to render calm, said, “I have the honour to present my most humble respects to your royal highness.”

Upon this Madame deigned to turn her eyes languishingly towards the comte, observing, “Ah! M. de Guiche, is that you; good day!”

The comte's patience almost forsook him, as he continued,—“Your royal highness danced just now most charmingly.”

“Do you think so?” she replied with indifference.

“Yes; the character which your royal highness assumed is in perfect harmony with your own.”

Madame again turned round, and, looking De Guiche full in the face with a bright and steady gaze, said,—“Why so?”

“Oh! there can be no doubt of it.”

“Explain yourself?”

“You represent a divinity, beautiful, disdainful, and inconstant.”

“You mean Pomona, comte?”

allude to the goddess you represent."

Madame remained silent for a moment, with her lips compressed, and observed,—“But, comte, you, too, are an excellent dancer.”

“I say, madame, I am only one of those who are never noticed, or who soon forgotten if they ever happen to be noticed.”

With this remark, accompanied by one of those deep sighs which affect the remotest fibres of one's being, his heart burdened with sorrow and going fast, his head on fire, and his gaze wandering, he bowed breathless, and withdrew behind the thicket. The only reply Madame conceded to make was by slightly raising her shoulders, and, as her sense of honour had discreetly retired while the conversation lasted, she led them by a look. The ladies were Mademoiselle de Tonnay-entente and Mademoiselle de Montalais.

“Did you hear what the Comte de Guiche said?” the princess inquired. “No.”

“It really is very singular,” she continued, in a compassionate tone, “that exile has affected poor M. de Guiche's wit.” And then, in a louder voice, fearful lest her unhappy victim might lose a syllable, she said,—“In the first place he danced badly, and then afterwards his remarks were silly.”

She then rose, humming the air to which she was presently going to dance. De Guiche had overheard everything. The arrow had pierced his heart and wounded him mortally. Then, at the risk of interrupting the progress of the *fête* by his annoyance, he fled from the scene, tearing the beautiful costume of Autumn in pieces, and scattering, as he went, the branches of vines, mulberry and almond trees, with all the other special attributes of his divinity. A quarter of an hour afterwards he returned to the theatre; but it will be readily believed that it was only a powerful effort of reason over his great excitement that had enabled him to turn: or perhaps, for the heart is so constituted, he found it impossible even to remain much longer separated from the presence of one who had broken that heart. Madame was finishing her figure. She saw, but did not look at, De Guiche, who, irritated and furious, turned his back on her as she passed him, escorted by her nymphs, and followed by a crowd of flatterers. During this time, at the other end of the theatre, near the box, a young woman was seated, with her eyes fixed upon one of the windows of the theatre, from which were issuing streams of light, the window in question being that of the royal box. As De Guiche quitted the theatre for the purpose of getting into the fresh air he so much needed, he passed close to this figure and saluted her. When she perceived the count, she rose, like a woman surprised in the midst of ideas she was anxious of concealing from herself. De Guiche stopped as he recognised her and said hurriedly,—“Good evening, Mademoiselle de la Vallière; I am indeed fortunate in meeting you.”

“I am also, M. de Guiche, am glad of this accidental meeting,” said the young girl, as she was about to withdraw.

“I pray do not leave me,” said De Guiche, stretching out his hand towards her, “for you would be contradicting the kind words you have just uttered. Remain, I implore you: the evening is most lovely. You must not escape from this tumult, and prefer your own society. Well, I understand it; all women who are possessed of any feeling do, and will never find them dull or lonely when removed from the giddy vortex of these exciting amusements. Oh! Heavens!” he exclaimed suddenly.

“What is the matter, monsieur le comte?” inquired La Vallière, with anxiety. “You seem agitated.”—“I! oh, no!”

"Will you allow me, M. de Guiche, to return you the thanks I proposed to offer you on the very first opportunity. It is to your commendation, I am aware, that I owe my admission among the nurseries of Madame's maids of honour."

"Indeed! Ah! I remember now, and I congratulate myself. I love any one?"—"I!" exclaimed La Vallière.

"Forgive me, I hardly know what I am saying; a thousand times give me; Madame was right, quite right, this brutal exile has completely turned my brain."

"And yet it seemed to me that the king received you with kindness."

"Do you think so? Received me with kindness—perhaps so—yes."

"There cannot be a doubt he received you kindly, for, in fact, you returned without his permission."

"Quite true, and I believe you are right. But have you not seen Bragelonne here?"

La Vallière started at the name. "Why do you ask?" she inquired.

"Have I offended you again?" said De Guiche. "In that case indeed unhappy, and greatly to be pitied."

"Yes, very unhappy, and very much to be pitied, Monsieur de Guiche, for you seem to be suffering terribly."

"Oh, mademoiselle, why have I not a devoted sister, or a true friend such as yourself?"

"You have friends, Monsieur de Guiche, and the Vicomte de Bragelonne, of whom you spoke just now, is, I believe, one of them."

"Yes, yes, you are right, he is one of my best friends. Farewell, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, farewell." And he fled, like one possessed, along the banks of the lake. His dark shadow glided, lengthening, as it appeared among the illumined yews and glittering undulations of the water. La Vallière looked after him, saying,—*"Yes, yes; he, too, suffering, and I begin to understand why."*

She had hardly finished when her companions, Mademoiselle de Montalais and Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, ran forward. They were released from their attendance, and had changed their costumes of nymphettes delighted with the beautiful night, and the success of the evening, returned to look after their companion.

"What, already here!" they said to her. "We thought we should find the first at the rendezvous."

"I have been here this quarter of an hour," replied La Vallière.

"Did not the dancing amuse you?"—"No."

"But surely the whole spectacle?"

"No more than the dancing. As far as a spectacle is concerned, I much prefer that which these dark woods present, in whose depths can be seen, now in one direction and again in another, a light passing by, though it were an eye, bright red in colour, sometimes open at other times closed."

"La Vallière is quite a poet," said Tonnay-Charente.

"In other words," said Montalais, "she is insupportable. Whenever there is a question of laughing a little, or of amusing ourselves with anything, La Vallière begins to cry; whenever we girls have reason to cry, because, perhaps, we have mislaid our dresses, or because our vanity has been wounded, or our costume fails to produce any effect, La Vallière laughs."

"As far as I am concerned, that is not my character," said Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente. "I am a woman, there are few like me; who

ves me, flatters me ; whoever flatters me, pleases me ; and whoever

ell !" said Montalais, " you do not finish."  
 is too difficult," replied Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, laughing

" Do you, who are so clever, finish for me."  
 d you, Louise ?" said Montalais, " does any one please you ?"  
 at is a matter which concerns no one but myself," replied the young  
 ing from the mossy bank on which she had been reclining during  
 ole time the ballet had lasted. " Now, mesdemoiselles, we have  
 to amuse ourselves to-night without any one to overlook us, and  
 t any escort. We are three in number, we like one another, and  
 ight is lovely ; look yonder, do you not see the moon slowly rising,  
 ing the topmost branches of the chestnuts and the oaks ? Oh ! beau-  
 ulk ! dear liberty ! the beautiful soft turf of the woods, the happiness  
 your friendship confers upon me ! let us walk arm-in-arm towards  
 arge trees. Out yonder all are at this moment seated at table and  
 ccupied, or preparing to adorn themselves for a set and formal pro-  
 e ; horses are being saddled or harnessed to the carriages—the  
 s mules or Madame's four white ponies. As for ourselves, we shall  
 each some retired spot where no eye can see us and no step follow  
 Do you not remember, Montalais, the woods of Chaverney and of  
 ord, the numberless poplars of Blois, where we exchanged some of  
 tual hopes ?"

d many confidences also ?"—" Yes."  
 ell," said Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, " I also think a good  
 but I take care——"

say nothing," said Montalais, " so that when Mademoiselle de  
 y-Charente thinks, Athenais is the only one who knows it."  
 ish !" said Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, " I hear steps  
 ching from this side."

ick, quick, then, among the high reed-grass," said Montalais, " stoop  
 his, you are so tall."

emoiselle de Tonnay-Charente stooped as she was told, and, almost  
 same moment they saw two gentlemen approaching, their heads  
 own, walking arm-in-arm, on the fine gravel-walk running parallel  
 e bank. The young girls had, indeed, made themselves small, for  
 g was to be seen of them."

is Monsieur de Guiche," whispered Montalais in Mademoiselle de  
 y-Charente's ear.

is Monsieur de Bragelonne," whispered the latter to La Vallière.

two young men approached still closer, conversing in animated

" She was here just now," said the count, " if I had only seen  
 should have declared it to be a vision, but I spoke to her."

ou are positive, then ?"

s ; but perhaps I frightened her."—" In what way ?"

! I was still half mad, at what you know, so that she could hardly  
 understood what I was saying, and must have become alarmed."

!" said Bragelonne, " do not make yourself uneasy : she is all kind-  
 and will excuse you ; she is clear-sighted, and will understand."

es, but if she should have understood, and understood too well, she  
 alk."

ou do not know Louise, count," said Raoul. " Louise possesses every  
 and has not a single fault." And the two young men passed on, and

y proceeded, their voices were soon lost in the distance.

"How is it, La Vallière," said Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, "that the Vicomte de Bragelonne spoke of you as Louise?"

"We were brought up together," replied Louise, blushing; "M. de Bragelonne has honoured me by asking my hand in marriage, but——"

"Well?"—"It seems the king will not consent to the marriage."

"Eh? Why the king? and what has the king to do with it?" exclaimed Aure sharply. "Good gracious! has the king the right to interfere in matters of that kind? Politics are politics, as M. de Mazarin used to say, but love is love. If, therefore, you love M. de Bragelonne, marry him, give my consent."

Athenais began to laugh.

"Oh! I speak seriously," replied Montalais, "and my opinion in this case is quite as good as the king's, I suppose; is it not, Louise?"

"Come," said La Vallière, "these gentlemen have passed; let us take advantage of our being alone to cross the open ground, and so take refuge in the woods."

"So much the better," said Athenais, "because I see the torches setting out from the château and the theatre, which seem as if they were preceding some person of distinction."

"Let us run, then," said all three. And, gracefully lifting up the long skirts of their silk dresses, they lightly ran across the open space between the lake and the thickest covert of the park. Montalais, agile as a deer, Athenais eager as a young wolf, bounded through the dry grass, and, not and then, some bold Acteon might, by the aid of the faint light, have perceived their straight and well-formed limbs somewhat displayed beneath the heavy folds of their satin petticoats. La Vallière, more refined and less bashful, allowed her dress to flow around her; retarded also by the lameness of her foot, it was not long before she called out to her companions to halt, and, left behind, she obliged them both to wait for her. At this moment, a man, concealed in a dry ditch full of young willow saplings, scrambled quickly up its shelving side, and ran off in the direction of the château. The three young girls, on their side, reached the outskirts of the park, every path of which they well knew. The ditches were bordered by high hedges full of flowers, which on that side protected the foot-passengers from being intruded upon by the horses and carriages. In fact, the sound of Madame's and of the queen's carriages could be heard in the distance upon the hard dry ground of the roads, followed by the mounted cavaliers. Distant music was heard in response, and when the soft note died away, the nightingale, with his song full of pride, poured forth his melodious chants, and his most complicated, learned, and sweetest compositions, to those who he perceived had met beneath the thick covert of the woods. Near the songster, in the dark background of the large trees, could be seen the glistening eyes of an owl, attracted by the harmony. In this way the *fête*, for the whole court was a *fête* also for the mysterious inhabitants of the forest; for certainly the deer from the brake, the pheasant on the branch, the fox in its hole, were all listening. One could really trace the life led by this nocturnal and invisible population from the restless movements which suddenly took place among the leaves. Our sylvan nymphs uttered a slight cry, but reassured immediately afterwards, they laughed, and resumed their walk. In this manner they reached the royal oak, the venerable relic of an oak which in its earlier days had listened to the sighs of Henry the Second for the beautiful Diana of Poitiers, and later still to those of Henry the Fourth for the lovely Gabrielle d'Estrées. Beneath this oak the gardeners had piled up the moss and turf in such

ner that never had a seat more luxuriously reposed the wearied limbs of any monarch. The trunk of the tree, somewhat rough to recline against, sufficiently large to accommodate the three young girls, whose voices were lost among the branches, which stretched downwards towards the park.

## CHAPTER CXVI.

### WHAT WAS SAID UNDER THE ROYAL OAK.

The softness of the air, the stillness of the foliage, tacitly imposed upon these young girls an engagement to change immediately their giddy conversation for one of a more serious character. She, indeed, whose disposition was the most lively,—Montalais, for instance,—was the first to yield to its influence; and she began by heaving a deep sigh, and saying: "What a happiness to be here alone, and at liberty, with every right to be frank, especially towards each other."

"Yes," said Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente; "for the court, however brilliant it may be, has always some falsehood concealed beneath the folds of its velvet robes, or beneath the blaze of its diamonds."

"I," replied La Vallière, "I never tell a falsehood; when I cannot speak truth, I remain silent."

"You will not remain long in favour," said Montalais; "it is not here, it was at Blois, where we told the dowager Madame all our little annoyances, and all our longings. There were certain days when Madame remembered that she herself had been young, and, on those days, who talked with her found in her a sincere friend. She related to us her relations with Monsieur, and we told her of the flirtations she had had with others, or, at least, the rumours of them which had been spread abroad. Poor woman, so simple-minded! she laughed at them, as we did. Where is she now?"

"Ah, Montalais,—laughter-loving Montalais!" cried La Vallière; "you are sighing again; the woods inspire you, and you are almost reasonable this evening."

"You ought not, either of you," said Athenaïs, "to regret the court at this time, unless you do not feel happy with us. A court is a place where men and women resort to talk of matters which mothers, guardians, and especially confessors, so severely denounce."

"Oh, Athenaïs!" said Louise, blushing.

"Athenaïs is frank to-night," said Montalais; "let us avail ourselves of it."

"Yes, let us take advantage of it; for this evening I could divulge the most secret secrets of my heart."

"Ah, if M. de Montespan were here!" said Montalais.

"Do you think that I care for M. de Montespan?" murmured the beautiful young girl.

"He is handsome, I believe?"

"Yes; and that is no small advantage in my eyes."

"There now, you see——"

"I will go further, and say that, of all the men whom one sees here, he is the handsomest and the most——"

"What was that?" said La Vallière, starting suddenly from the mossy bank.

"A deer which hurried by, perhaps."

"I am only afraid of men," said Athenais.

"When they do not resemble M. de Montespau."

"A truce to this raillery M. de Montespau is attentive to me, but this does not commit me in any way. Is not M. de Guiche here—he who is devoted to Madame?"

"Poor fellow!" said La Vallière.

"Why poor? Madame is sufficiently beautiful, and of sufficiently high rank, I suppose?"

La Vallière shook her head sorrowfully, saying: "When one loves, it is neither beauty nor rank; when one loves, it should be the heart, or the eyes only, of him, or of her, whom one loves."

Montalais began to laugh loudly. "Heart, eyes!" she said; "oh, sugar-plums!"—"I speak for myself," replied La Vallière.

"Noble sentiments," said Athenais, with an air of protection, but with indifference.

"Are they not your own?" said Louise.

"Perfectly so; but, to continue, how can one pity a man who bestows his attentions upon such a woman as Madame? If any disproportion exists, it is on the count's side."

"Oh! no, no," returned La Vallière; "it is on Madame's side."

"Explain yourself."

"I will. Madame has not even a wish to know what love is. She diverts herself with the feeling, as children do with fireworks, of which a spark might set a palace on fire. It makes a display, and that is all she cares about. Besides, pleasure and love form the tissue of which she wishes her life to be woven. M. de Guiche will love this illustrious personage but she will never love him."

Athenais laughed disdainfully. "Do people really love?" she said. "Where are the noble sentiments you just now uttered? Does not a woman's virtue consist in the courageous refusal of every intrigue which might compromise her? A properly-regulated woman, endowed with a generous heart, ought to look at men, make herself loved, adored even by them, and say, at the very utmost, but once in her life, 'I begin to think that I ought not to have been what I am; I should have detested this one less than others.'"

"Therefore," exclaimed La Vallière, "that is what M. de Montespau has to expect."

"Certainly, he as well as every one else. What! have I not said this? I admit he possesses a certain superiority, and would not that be enough? My dear child, a woman is a queen during the whole period nature permits her to enjoy sovereign power—from fifteen to thirty-five years of age. After that, we are free to have a heart, when we only have that left—"

"Oh, oh!" murmured La Vallière.

"Excellent!" cried Montalais; "a wife and mistress combined in one. Athenais, you will make your way in the world."

"Do you not approve of what I say?"

"Completely," replied her laughing companion.

"You are not serious, Montalais?" said Louise.

"Yes, yes; I approve everything Athenais has just said; only——"

"Only what?"

"Well, I cannot carry it out. I have the firmest principles; I form resolutions beside which the laws of the Stadtholder and of the King of Spain are child's play; but, when the moment arrives to put them in execution, nothing comes of them."

"our courage fails," said Athenais, scornfully.—" Miserably so." "Great weakness of nature," returned Athenais. " But at least you have a choice."

"Why, no. It pleases fate to disappoint me in everything : I dream of honors, and I find only——"

"Sure, Aure!" exclaimed La Vallière, " for pity's sake, do not, for the sake of saying something witty, sacrifice those who love you with such devoted affection."

"Oh, I do not trouble myself much about that ; those who love me are contentedly happy that I do not dismiss them altogether. So much the better for myself if I have a weakness for any one ; but so much the worse for others if I revenge myself upon them for it."

"You are right," said Athenais, " and perhaps you, too, will reach the goal ; in other words, young ladies, that is termed being a coquette. Those who are very silly in most things, are particularly so in confounding, for the term coquetry, a woman's pride, and her variableness. I, for instance, am proud—that is to say, impregnable ; I treat my admirers gently, but without any pretension to retain them. Men call me a coquette, because they are vain enough to think I care for them. Other men—Montalais, for instance—have allowed themselves to be influenced by flattery ; they would be lost were it not for that most fortunate principle of instinct which urges them to change suddenly, and punish the woman whose devotion they had so recently accepted."

"A very learned dissertation," said Montalais, in the tone of thorough contempt.—" It is odious !" murmured Louise.

"Thanks to this sort of coquetry, for indeed that is genuine coquetry," continued Mademoiselle Tonnay-Charente ; " the lover who, a little while ago, was puffed up with pride, in a minute afterwards, is suffering at the expense of his vanity and self-esteem. He was, perhaps, already beginning to assume the airs of a conqueror, but now he recedes ; he was not to assume an air of protection towards us, but he is obliged to prove himself once more. The result of all which is, that, instead of having a husband who is jealous and troublesome, from restraint in his conduct towards us, we have a lover always trembling in our presence, always dominated by our attractions, and always submissive ; and for this simple reason, that he finds the same woman never the same. Be convinced, therefore, of the advantages of coquetry. Possessing that, one reigns as a queen among women in cases where Providence has withheld that precious quality of holding one's heart and mind in check."

"How clever you are," said Montalais, " and how well you understand the duty women owe themselves."

"I am only settling a case of individual happiness," said Athenais, modestly ; " and defend myself, like all weak, loving dispositions, against the oppression of the stronger." La Vallière did not say a word.

"Does she not approve of what we are saying?"

"Nay ; only I do not understand it," said Louise. " You talk like those who would not be called upon to live in this world of ours."

"And very pretty your world is," said Montalais.

"A world," returned Athenais, " in which men worship a woman until she has fallen,—or insult her when she has fallen."

"Who spoke to you of falling?" said Louise.

"Yours is a new theory, then ; will you tell us how you intend to resist the alluring temptation, if you allow yourself to be hurried away by feelings of affection?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the young girl, raising towards the dark heavens her beautiful eyes filled with tears, "if you did but know what a heart was, I would explain, and would convince you; a loving heart is stronger than all your coquetry, and more powerful than all your pride. A woman I never truly loved, I believe; a man never loves with idolatry, except he feels himself loved in return. Let old men, whom we read of in comedies, fancy themselves adored by coquettes. A young man is conscious of his passion, and knows, them; if he has a fancy, or a strong desire, or an absorbing passion, for a coquette, he cannot mistake her; a coquette may drive him out of his senses, but will never make him fall in love. Love, such as I conceive it to be, is an incessant, complete, and perfect sacrifice; but it is not the sacrifice of one only of the two persons who are united. It is the perfect abnegation of two who are desirous of blending their beings into one. If I ever love, I shall implore my lover to leave me free and pure; I will tell him, what he will understand, that my heart was torn by my refusal, and he, in his love for me, aware of the magnitude of my sacrifice,—he, in his turn, I say, will show his devotion for me,—will respect me, and will not seek my ruin, to insult me when I shall have fallen, as you said just now, when uttering your blasphemies against love, such as I understand it. That is my idea of love. And now you will tell me perhaps, that my lover will despise me; I defy him to do so, unless he be the vilest of men, and my heart assures me that it is not such a man I should choose. A look from me will repay him for the sacrifices he makes, or it will inspire him with virtues which he would never think he possessed."

"But, Louise," exclaimed Montalais, "you tell us this, and do not carry it into practice."—"What do you mean?"

"You are adored by Raoul de Bragelonne, who worships you on both his knees. The poor fellow is made the victim of your virtue, just as he would be—nay, more than he would be even, of my coquetry, or of Athenaïs's pride."

"This is simply a different shade of coquetry," said Athenaïs; "and Louise, I perceive, is a coquette without knowing it."

"Oh!" said La Vallière.

"Yes, you may call it instinct, if you please, keenest sensibility, exquisite refinement of feeling, perpetual display of unrestrained outbreaks of affection which end in nothing. It is very artful too, and very effective. I should even, now that I reflect on it, have preferred this system of tactics to my own pride, for waging war with members of the other sex, because it offers the advantage sometimes of thoroughly convincing them; but, at the present moment, without utterly condemning myself, I declare it to be superior to the simple coquetry of Montalais." And the two young girls began to laugh.

La Vallière alone preserved a silence, and quietly shook her head. Then, a moment after, she added, "If you were to tell me in the presence of a man, but a fourth part of what you have just said, or even if I were assured that you think it, I should die of shame and grief where I am now."

"Very well; die, poor tender little darling," replied Mademoiselle Tonney-Charente; "for, if there are no men here, there are at least ten women, your own friends, who declare you to be attainted and convicted of being a coquette from instinct; in other words, the most dangerous kind of coquette which the world possesses."

"Oh! mesdemoiselles," replied La Vallière, blushing, and almost ready to weep. Her two companions again burst out laughing.

Very well ! I shall ask Bragelonne to tell me."

"Bragelonne?" said Athenais.

"Yes ! Bragelonne, who is as courageous as Cæsar, and as clever and as M. Fouquet. Poor fellow ! for twelve years he has known you, loved you, and yet—one can hardly believe it—he has never even kissed the tips of your fingers."

"Tell us the reason of this cruelty, you who are all heart," said Athenais to La Vallière.

"I will explain it by a single word—virtue. You will perhaps deny the existence of virtue?"

"Come, Louise, tell us the truth," said Aure, taking her by the hand.

"What do you wish me to tell you?" cried La Vallière.

"Whatever you like ; but it will be useless for you to say anything, for I persist in my opinion of you. A coquette from instinct ; in other words, as I have already said, and I say it again, the most dangerous of coquettes."

"Oh ! no, no ; for pity's sake do not believe that !"

"What ! twelve years of extreme severity."

"How can that be, since twelve years ago I was only five years old. The freedom of the child cannot surely be added to the young girl's punishment."

"Well ! you are now seventeen ; three years instead of twelve. During the three years you have remained constantly and unchangeably cruel. First you are arrayed the silent shades of Blois, the meetings when you secretly conned the stars together, the evening wanderings beneath the cypress-trees, his impassioned twenty years speaking to your fourteen years, the fire of his glances addressed to yourself."

"Yes, yes ; but so it is !"—"Impossible !"

"But why impossible?"

"Tell us something credible, and we will believe you."

"Yet if you were to suppose one thing."—"What is that?"

"Suppose that I thought I was in love, and that I am not."

"What ! not in love !"

"If I have acted in a different manner to what others do when they are in love, it is because I do not love ; and because my hour has not yet come."

"Louise, Louise," said Montalais, "take care, or I will remind you of the remark you made just now. Raoul is not here ; do not overwhelm him while he is absent ; be charitable, and if, on closer inspection, you think you do not love him, tell him so, poor fellow !" and she began to weep.

"Louise pitied M. de Guiche just now," said Athenais ; "would it be possible to detect the explanation of the indifference for the one in this passion for the other?"

"Say what you please," said La Vallière, sadly ; "upbraid me as you like, since you do not understand me."

"Oh ! oh !" replied Montalais, "temper, sorrow, and tears ; we are all things, Louise, and are not, I assure you, quite the monsters you suppose. Look at the proud Athenais, as she is called ; she does not love M. de Montespan, it is true, but she would be in despair if M. de Montespan were not to love her. Look at me ; I laugh at M. Malicorne, but the poor fellow whom I laugh at knows very well when he may be permitted to kiss his lips upon my hand. And yet the eldest of us is not twenty yet. What a future for us !"

"Silly, silly girls !" murmured Louise.

"You are quite right," said Montalais ; "and you alone have spoken words of wisdom."—"Certainly."

"I do not dispute it," replied Athenais. "And so it is positive you not love poor M. de Bragelonne?"

"Perhaps she does," said Montalais ; "she is not yet quite sure of it. But, in any case, listen, Athenais : if M. de Bragelonne becomes free will give you a little friendly advice."—"What is that?"

"To look at him well before you decide in favour of M. de Montespar."

"Oh ! in that way of considering the subject, M. de Bragelonne is not the only one whom one could look at with pleasure ; M. de Guiche for instance has his value also."

"He did not distinguish himself this evening," said Montalais ; "and I know from very good authority that Madame thought him unbearable."

"M. de Saint-Aignan produced a most brilliant effect, and I am sure that more than one person who saw him dance this evening will not so soon forget him. Do you not think so, La Vallière?"

"Why do you ask me ? I did not see him, nor do I know him."

"What ! you did not see M. de Saint-Aignan ? You do not know him?"

"No."

"Come, come, do not affect a virtue more extravagantly excessive than our *fiertés* ; you have eyes I suppose?"—"Excellent."

"Then you must have seen all those who danced this evening."

"Yes, nearly all."

"That is a very impertinent 'nearly all' for some."

"You must take it for what it is worth."

"Very well ; now, among all those gentlemen whom you saw, which do you prefer?"

"Yes," said Montalais, "is it M. de Saint-Aignan, or M. de Guiche, or M.——?"—"I prefer no one ; I thought them all about the same."

"Do you mean, then, that among that brilliant assembly, the first couple in the world, no one pleased you?"

"I do not say that."—"Tell us, then, who your ideal is?"

"It is not an ideal being."—"He exists, then?"

"In very truth," exclaimed La Vallière, aroused and excited, "I cannot understand you at all. What ! you who have a heart as I have, eyes as I have, and yet you speak of M. de Guiche, and of M. de Saint-Aignan when the king was there." These words, uttered in a precipitate manner and in an agitated, fervid tone of voice, made her two companions, between whom she was seated, exclaim in a manner which terrified her, "The king !"

La Vallière buried her face in her hands. "Yes," she murmured ; "the king ! the king ! Have you ever seen any one to be compared to the king?"

"You were right just now in saying you had excellent eyes, Louise, you see a great distance ; too far indeed. Alas ! the king is not one upon whom our poor eyes have a right to be fixed."

"That is too true," cried La Vallière ; "it is not the privilege of all eyes to gaze upon the sun ; but I will look upon him, even were I to be blind in doing so." At this moment, and as though caused by the words which had just escaped La Vallière's lips, a rustling of leaves, and of that which sounded like some silken material, was heard behind the adjoining bushes. The young girls hastily rose, almost terrified out of their senses. The king distinctly saw the leaves move, without observing what it was that stirred them.

"It is a wolf or a wild boar," cried Montalais ; "fly ! fly !" The th

is, in the very extremity of terror, fled by the first path which presented itself, and did not stop until they had reached the verge of the wood. Here, breathless, leaning against each other, feeling their hearts throbbing, they endeavoured to collect their senses, but could only succeed in doing so after the lapse of some minutes. Perceiving at last the lights from the windows of the *château*, they decided to walk towards them. La Vallière was exhausted with fatigue, and Aure and Athenais were obliged to support her.

"We have escaped well," said Montalais.

"I am greatly afraid," said La Vallière, "that it was something worse than a wolf. For my part, and I speak as I think, I should have preferred to have run the risk of being devoured alive by some wild animal than to have been listened to and overheard. Fool, fool, that I am! How could I have thought, how could I have said what I did." And saying this, her head bowed like the head of a reed; she felt her limbs fail, and all her strength abandoning her, she glided almost inanimate from the arms of her companions, and sank down upon the grass.

## CHAPTER CXVII.

### THE KING'S UNEASINESS.

Let us leave poor La Vallière, who had fainted in the arms of her two companions, and return to the precincts of the royal oak. The young king had hardly run twenty paces, when the sound which had so much alarmed them was renewed among the branches. A man's figure might indistinctly be perceived, and putting the branches of the bushes aside, he appeared upon the verge of the wood, and perceiving that the place was empty, burst out into a peal of laughter. It is useless to say that the form in question was that of a young and handsome man, who immediately made a sign to another, who thereupon made his appearance.

"Well, sire," said the second figure, advancing timidly, "has your majesty sent our young sentimentalists to flight?"

"It seems so," said the king, "and you can show yourself without fear."

"Take care, sire; you will be recognised."

"But I tell you they have gone."

"This is a most fortunate meeting, sire; and, if I dared offer an opinion to your majesty, we ought to follow them."

"They are far away by this time."

"They would easily allow themselves to be overtaken, especially if they knew who were following them."

"What do you mean by that, coxcomb that you are?"

"Why, one of them seems to have taken a fancy to me, and another compared you to the sun."

"The greater reason why we should not show ourselves, Saint-Aignan, is, the sun does not show himself in the night-time."

"Upon my word, sire, your majesty seems to have very little curiosity. In your place, I should like to know who are the two nymphs, the two dryads, the two hamadryads, who have so good an opinion of us."

"I shall know them again very well, I assure you, without running after them."—"By what means?"

"By their voices, of course. They belong to the court, and the one who spoke of me had a very sweet voice."

"Ah! your majesty permits yourself to be influenced by flattery."

"No one will ever say it is a means you make use of."

"Forgive my stupidity, sire !"

"Come ; let us go and look where I told you."

"Is the passion, then, which your majesty confided to me, already forgotten?"

"Oh ! no, indeed. How is it possible to forget such beautiful eyes as Mademoiselle de la Vallière has?"

"Yet the other had so sweet a voice."

"Which one?"—"She who has fallen in love with the sun."

"M. de Saint-Aignan !"—"Forgive me, sire."

"Well, I am not sorry you should believe me to be an admirer of sweet voices, as well as of beautiful eyes. I know you to be a terrible talker, and to-morrow I shall have to pay for the confidence I have shown you."

"What do you mean, sire?"

"That to-morrow every one will know that I have designs upon this little La Vallière ; but be careful, Saint-Aignan, I have confided my secret to no one but you, and, if any one should speak to me about it, I shall know who has betrayed my secret."

"You are angry, sire."

"No ; but you understand I do not wish to compromise the poor girl."

"Do not be afraid, sire."

"You promise me, then?"—"I give you my word of honour."

"Excellent," thought the king, laughing to himself ; "now every one will know to-morrow that I have been running about after La Vallière to-night."

Then, endeavouring to see where he was, he said, "Why, we have lost ourselves."—"Not quite so bad as that, sire."

"Where does that gate lead to?"

"To the great Road-Point, sire."

"Where we were going when we heard the sound of women's voices."

"Yes, sire, and the termination of a conversation in which I had the honour of hearing my own name pronounced by the side of your majesty's."

"You return to that subject very frequently, Saint-Aignan."

"Your majesty will forgive me, but I am delighted to know that a woman exists, whose thoughts are occupied about me, without my knowledge, and without having done anything to deserve it. Your majesty cannot comprehend this satisfaction, for your rank and merit attract attention, and compel regard."

"No, no, Saint-Aignan, believe me or not, as you like," said the king, leaning familiarly upon Saint-Aignan's arm, and taking the path which he thought would lead him to the château ; "but this candid confession of this perfectly disinterested preference of one who will, perhaps, never attract my attention—in one word, the mystery of this adventure excites me, and the truth is, that if I were not so taken up with La Vallière——"

"Do not let that interfere with your majesty's intentions ; you have time enough before you."

"What do you mean?"

"La Vallière is said to be very strict in her ideas."

"You excite my curiosity, and I am anxious to find her again. Come, let us walk on."

The king spoke untruly, for nothing, on the contrary, could make him less anxious, but he had a part to play, and so he walked on hurriedly. Saint-Aignan followed him at a short distance. Suddenly the king stopped, the courtier followed his example,

Saint-Aignan," he said, "do you not hear some one moaning?" "Yes, sire, and crying, too, it seems." "It is in this direction," said the king. "It sounds like the tears and sobs of a woman."

"Run," said the king; and, following a bye-path, they ran across the sabbles. As they approached, the cries were more distinctly heard. "Help, help," exclaimed two voices. The king and his companion redoubled their speed, and, as they approached nearer, the sighs they had heard were changed into loud sobs. The cry of "Help! help!" was again repeated; at the sound of which the king and Saint-Aignan increased the rapidity of their pace. Suddenly, at the other side of a ditch, under the branches of a willow, they perceived a woman on her knees, holding her head in her arms, who seemed to have fainted. A few paces from them, a man, standing in the middle of the path, was calling for assistance. Perceiving two gentlemen, whose rank she could not tell, her cries for assistance were redoubled. The king, who was in advance of his companion, leaped across the ditch, and reached the group at the very moment when the woman, from the end of the path which led to the château, a dozen persons were approaching, who had been drawn to the spot by the same cries which had attracted the attention of the king and M. de Saint-Aignan.

"What is the matter, young ladies?" said Louis.

"The king!" exclaimed Mademoiselle de Montalais, in her astonishment, as she saw the king's head fall upon the ground.

"Yes, it is the king; but that is no reason why you should abandon your companion. Who is she?"

"It is Mademoiselle de la Vallière, sire."

"Mademoiselle de la Vallière!"

"Yes, sire, she has just fainted."

"Poor child!" said the king. "Quick, quick, fetch a surgeon." But never great the anxiety with which the king had pronounced these words may have seemed to others, he had not so carefully watched over himself, that they appeared, as well as the gesture which accompanied them, somewhat cold to Saint-Aignan, to whom the king had confided the most affection with which she had inspired him.

"Saint-Aignan," continued the king, "watch over Mademoiselle de la Vallière, I beg. Send for a surgeon. I will hasten forward and inform the king of the accident which has befallen one of her maids of honour." In fact, while M. de Saint-Aignan was busily engaged in making arrangements for carrying Mademoiselle de la Vallière to the château, he hurried forward, happy to have an opportunity of approaching Madame, and of speaking to her under some colourable pretext. Fortunately, the carriage was passing; the coachman was told to stop, and the persons who were inside, having been informed of the accident, eagerly gave up their seats to Mademoiselle de la Vallière. The current of fresh air produced by the rapid motion of the carriage, soon recalled her to her senses. Having reached the château, she was able, though very weak, to alight from the carriage; and, with the assistance of Athenais, and of Montalais, reach the inner apartments. They made her sit down in one of the rooms on the ground-floor. After awhile, as the accident had not produced much effect upon those who had been walking, the promenade was resumed. During this time the king had found Madame beneath a tree, over-hanging branches, and had seated himself by her side.

"Take care, sire," said Henrietta to him, in a low tone, "you do not betray yourself as indifferent as you should be."

las!" replied the king, in the same tone, "I much fear we have entered into an agreement above our strength to keep." He then added aloud, "You have heard of the accident, I suppose?"

"What accident?"

"Oh! in seeing you I forgot that I had come expressly to tell you of it. I am, however, painfully affected by it; one of your maids of honour, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, has just fainted."

"Indeed! poor girl," said the princess, quietly, "what was the cause of it?"

She then added, in an undertone, "You forget, sire, that you wish others to believe in your passion for this girl, and yet you remain here while she is almost dying, perhaps, elsewhere."

"Ah! madame," said the king, sighing, "how much more perfect you are in your part than I am, and how well you think of everything!"

He then rose, saying loud enough for every one to hear him, "Permit me to leave you, madame; my uneasiness is very great, and I wish to be quite certain, myself, that proper attention has been given to Mademoiselle de la Vallière." And the king left again to return to La Vallière, where those who had been present commented upon the king's remark:—"My uneasiness is very great."

## CHAPTER CXVIII.

### THE KING'S SECRET.

ON his way Louis met the Comte de Saint-Aignan. "Well, Saint-Aignan," he inquired, with affected interest, "how is the invalid?"

"Really, sire," stammered Saint-Aignan, "to my shame, I confess I do not know."

"What! you do not know?" said the king, pretending to take in a serious manner this want of attention for the object of his predilection.

"Will your majesty pardon me? but I have just met one of our three loquacious wood-nymphs, and I confess that my attention has been taken away from other matters."

"Ah!" said the king, eagerly, "you have found, then——"

"The one who deigned to speak of me in such advantageous terms, and, having found mine, I was searching for yours, sire, when I had the happiness to meet your majesty."

"Very well; but Mademoiselle de la Vallière before everything else," said the king, faithful to the character he had assumed.

"Oh! our charming invalid," said Saint-Aignan; "how fortunately her fainting came on, since your majesty had already occupied yourself about her."

"What is the name of your fair lady, Saint-Aignan? Is it a secret?"

"It ought to be a secret, and a very great one, even; but your majesty will be aware that no secret can possibly exist for you."

"Well, what is her name?"

"Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente."—"Is she pretty?"

"Exceedingly so, sire; and I recognised the voice which pronounced my name in such tender accents. I then accosted her, questioned her as well as I was able to do, in the midst of the crowd; and she told me, without suspecting anything, that a little while ago she was under the great oak, with her two friends, when the appearance of a wolf or a robber had terrified them, and made them run away."

But," inquired the king, anxiously, "what are the names of these two  
ids?"

Sire," said Saint-Aignan, "will your majesty send me forthwith to the  
tulle?"—"What for?"

Because I am an egotist and a fool. My surprise was so great at  
a conquest, and at so fortunate a discovery, that I went no further  
my inquiries. Besides, I did not think that your majesty would attach  
very great importance to what you heard, knowing how much your  
ntion was taken up by Mademoiselle de la Vallière; and then, Made-  
selle de Tonnay Charente left me precipitately, to return to Mademoi-  
e de la Vallière."

Let us hope, then, that I shall be as fortunate as yourself. Come,  
at-Aignan."

Your majesty is ambitious, I perceive, and does not wish to allow any  
quest to escape you. Well, I assure you that I will conscientiously  
about my inquiries; and, moreover, from one of the three Graces we  
ll learn the names of the others, and, by the name, the secret."

I, too," said the king, "only require to hear her voice to know it  
in. Come, let us say no more about it, but show me where poor La  
lière is."

Well," thought Saint-Aignan, "the king's regard is beginning to dis-  
y itself, and for that girl, too. It is extraordinary; I should never have  
ieved it." And with this thought passing through his mind, he showed  
king the room where La Vallière had been taken; the king entered,  
owed by Saint-Aignan. In a low room, near a large window looking  
upon the gardens, La Vallière, reclining in a large arm-chair, inhaled  
deep draughts the perfumed evening breeze. From the loosened body  
her dress, the lace fell in tumbled folds, mingling with the tresses of her  
utiful fair hair, which lay scattered upon her shoulders. Her languish-  
eyes were filled with tears; she seemed as lifeless as those beautiful  
ions of our dreams, which pass before the closed eyes of the sleeper,  
opening their wings without moving them, unclosing their lips without  
ound escaping them. The pearl-like pallor of La Vallière possessed a  
rm which it would be impossible to describe. Mental and bodily  
fering had produced upon her features a soft and noble expression of  
ef; from the perfect passiveness of her arms and bust, she more re-  
mbled one whose soul had passed away, than a living being; she seemed  
to hear either the whisperings of her companions, or the distant mur-  
rs which arose from the neighbourhood. She seemed to be communing  
hin herself; and her beautiful, slender, and delicate hands trembled  
m time to time, as though from the contact of some invisible touch.  
e was so completely absorbed in her reverie, that the king entered with-  
her perceiving him. At a distance he gazed upon her lovely face, upon  
ich the moon shed its pure silvery light.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, with a terror he could not control,  
he is dead."

"No, sire," said Montalais, in a low voice; "on the contrary, she is  
tter. Are you not better, Louise?"

But Louise did not answer. "Louise," continued Montalais, "the king  
s deigned to express his uneasiness on your account."

"The king!" exclaimed Louise, starting up abruptly, as if a stream of  
e had darted through her frame to her heart; "the king uneasy about  
?"—"Yes," said Montalais.

"The king is here, then?" said La Vallière, not venturing to look  
and her.

"That voice ! that voice !" whispered Louis, eagerly, to Saint-Aignan.

"Yes, it is so," replied Saint-Aignan ; "your majesty is right ; it is she who declared her love for the sun."

"Hush !" said the king. And then approaching La Vallière, he said "You are not well, Mademoiselle de la Vallière ? Just now, indeed, in the park, I saw that you had fainted. How were you attacked ?"

"Sire," stammered out the poor child, pale and trembling, "I really not know."

"You have been walking too much," said the king ; "and fatigue perhaps——"

"No, sire," said Montalais, eagerly, answering for her friend, "it could not be from fatigue, for we passed part of the evening seated beneath the royal oak."

"Under the royal oak?" returned the king, starting. "I was not deceived ; it is as I thought." And he directed a look of intelligence at the comte.

"Yes," said Saint-Aignan, "under the royal oak, with Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente."

"How do you know that ?" inquired Montalais.

"In a very simple way. Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente told me so."

"In that case, she probably told you the cause of Mademoiselle de Vallière fainting?"

"Why, yes ; she told me something about a wolf or a robber. I forgot precisely which." La Vallière listened, her eyes fixed, her bosom heaving as if, gifted with an acuteness of perception, she foresaw a portion of the truth. Louis imagined this attitude and agitation to be the consequence of a terror but partially removed. "Nay, fear nothing," he said, with rising emotion which he could not conceal ; "the wolf which terrified you so much was simply a wolf with two legs."

"It was a man, then," said Louise ; "it was a man who was listening."

"Suppose it were, mademoiselle, what great evil was there in his having listened ? Is it likely that, even in your own opinion, you would have said anything which could not have been listened to ?"

La Vallière wrung her hands, and hid her face in them, as if to hide her blushes. "In Heaven's name," she said, "who was concealed there ? who was listening ?"

The king advanced towards her, to take hold of one of her hands. "I was I," he said, bowing with marked respect. "Is it likely I could have frightened you ?" La Vallière uttered a loud cry ; for the second time her strength forsook her ; and, cold, moaning, and in utter despair, she again fell apparently lifeless in her chair. The king had just time to hold out his arm ; so that she was partially supported by him. Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente and Montalais, who stood a few paces from the king and La Vallière, motionless and almost petrified at the recollection of their conversation with La Vallière, did not think even of offering their assistance to her, feeling restrained by the presence of the king, who, with one knee on the ground, held La Vallière round the waist with his arm.

"You heard, sire?" murmured Athenais. But the king did not reply ; he remained with his eyes fixed upon La Vallière's half-closed eyes, and held her drooping hand in his own.

"Of course," replied Saint-Aignan, who, on his side, hoping that Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente would faint, advanced towards her, holding his arms extended, "of course ; we did not even lose a word." But the haughty Athenais was not a woman to faint easily ; she darted a terrible

at Saint-Aignan, and fled. Montalais, with more courage, advanced bravely towards Louise, and received her from the king's hands, who was already fast losing his presence of mind, as he felt his face covered by perfumed tresses of the seemingly dying girl. "Excellent," said Saint-Aignan. "This is indeed an adventure; and it will be my own fault if I am not the first to relate it."

The king approached him, and, with a trembling voice and a passionate air, said, "Not a syllable, comte."

The poor king forgot that, only an hour before, he had given him a similar recommendation, but with the very opposite intention; namely, that the comte should be indiscreet. It was a matter of course, that the latter recommendation was quite as unnecessary as the former. Half an hour afterwards, everybody in Fontainebleau knew that Mademoiselle de la Vallière had had a conversation under the royal oak with Montalais and Ton-Charente, and that in this conversation she had confessed her affection for the king. It was known, also, that the king, after having manifested uneasiness with which Mademoiselle de la Vallière's health had interested him, had turned pale, and trembled very much as he received the beautiful girl fainting in his arms; so that it was quite agreed among the courtiers, that the greatest event of the period had just been revealed; that his majesty loved Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and that, consequently, Monsieur could now sleep in perfect tranquillity. It was this even, that the queen-mother, as surprised as the others by this sudden change, hastened to tell the young queen and Philippe d'Orleans. Only she set to work in a different manner, by attacking them in the following way:—"To my daughter-in-law she said, "See now, Thérèse, how very wrong you are to accuse the king; now it is said he is devoted to some other person; why should there be any greater truth in the report of to-day than that of yesterday, or in that of yesterday than in that of to-day?" To Monsieur, in relating to him the adventure of the royal oak, she said, "Are you not very absurd in your jealousies, my dear Philip? It is asserted that the king is madly in love with that little La Vallière. Say nothing of it to your wife; for the queen will know all about it very soon." This later confidential communication had an immediate result. Monsieur, who had regained his composure, went triumphantly to look after his wife, and, as it was not yet midnight, and the *fête* was to continue until two in the morning, he offered her his hand for a promenade. At the end of a few paces, however, the first thing he did was to disobey his mother's instructions.

"Do not go and tell any one, the queen least of all," he said mysteriously, "what people say about the king."

"What do they say about him?" inquired Madame.

"That my brother has fallen suddenly in love."

"With whom?"

"With Mademoiselle de la Vallière." As it was dark, Madame could smile at her ease.

"Ah!" she said, "and how long is it since this has been the case?"

"For some days, so it seems. But that was nothing but pure nonsense, for it is only this evening that he has revealed his passion."

"The king shows his good taste," said Madame, "and in my opinion she is a very charming girl."

"I verily believe you are jesting."—"I! in what way?"

"In any case this passion will make some one very happy, even if it be only La Vallière herself."

"Really," continued the princess, "you speak as if you had read into the inmost recesses of La Vallière's heart. Who has told you that she agreed to return the king's affection?"

"And who has told you that she will not return it?"

"She loves the Vicomte de Bragelonne."—"You think so."

"She is even affianced to him."—"She was so."

"What do you mean?"

"When they went to ask the king's permission to arrange the marriage, he refused his permission."—"Refused?"

"Yes, although the request was preferred by the Comte de la Fère himself, for whom the king has the greatest regard, on account of the part he took in your brother's restoration, and in other events also, which happened a long time ago."

"Well! the poor lovers must wait until the king is pleased to change his opinion; they are young, and there is time enough."

"But, dear me," said Philip, laughing, "I perceive that you do not know the best part of the affair."—"No!"

"That by which the king was most deeply touched."

"The king, do you say, has been deeply touched?"

"To the very heart."

"But how?—in what manner?—tell me directly."

"By an adventure, the romance of which cannot be equalled."

"You know how I love such adventures, and yet you keep me waiting," said the princess, impatiently.

"Well, then——" and Monsieur paused.

"I am listening."

"Under the royal oak—you know where the royal oak is?"

"What can that matter? Under the royal oak, you were saying."

"Well! Mademoiselle de la Vallière, fancying herself alone with her two friends, revealed to them her affection for the king."

"Ah!" said Madame, beginning to be uneasy, "her affection for the king?"—"Yes."

"When was this?"—"About an hour ago."

Madame started, and then said, "And no one knew of this affection?"

"No one."

"Not even his majesty?"

"Not even his majesty. The little creature kept her secret most strict to herself, when suddenly it proved stronger than herself, and so escaped her."

"And from whom did you get this absurd tale?"

"Why, as everybody else did, from La Vallière herself, who confessed her love to Montalais and Tonnay-Charente, who were her companions."

Madame stopped suddenly, and by a hasty movement let go her husband's hand.

"Did you say it was an hour ago she made this confession?" Madame inquired.

"About that time."

"Is the king aware of it?"

"Why, that is the very thing which constitutes the whole romance of the affair, for the king was behind the royal oak with Saint-Aignan, and he heard the whole of the interesting conversation without losing a single word of it."

Madame felt struck to the heart, saying incautiously, "But I have seen the king since, and he never told me a word about it."

"Of course," said Monsieur; "he took care not to speak of it to you him-  
 since he recommended every one not to say a word about it to you."

"What do you mean?" said Madame, irritated.

"I mean that they wished to keep you in ignorance of the affair alto-  
 er."—"But why should they wish to conceal it from me?"

"From the fear that your friendship for the young queen might induce  
 to say something about it to her, nothing more."

Madame hung down her head; her feelings were grievously wounded.  
 She could not enjoy a moment's repose until she had met the king. As a  
 man is, most naturally, the very last person in his kingdom who knows  
 what is said about him, in the same way that a lover is the only one who  
 is kept in ignorance of what is said about his mistress, therefore, when the  
 king perceived Madame, who was looking for him, he approached her  
 somewhat disturbed, but still gracious and attentive in his manner.  
 Madame waited for him to speak about La Vallière first; but as he did  
 not speak of her, she said, "And the poor girl?"

"What poor girl?" said the king.

"La Vallière. Did you not tell me, sire, that she had fainted?"

"She is still very ill," said the king, affecting the greatest indifference.

"But surely that will prejudicially affect the rumour you were going to  
 add, sire?"

"What rumour?"—"That your attention was taken up by her."

"Oh," said the king, carelessly, "I trust it will be reported all the same."

Madame still waited: she wished to know if the king would speak to  
 her of the adventure of the royal oak; but the king did not say a word  
 about it. Madame, on her side, did not open her lips about the adventure,  
 but the king took leave of her without having reposed the slightest con-  
 fidence in her. Hardly had she seen the king move away, than she set out  
 in search of Saint-Aignan. Saint-Aignan was never very difficult to find;

as was like the smaller vessels which always follow in the wake of, and  
 renders to, the larger ships. Saint-Aignan was the very man whom  
 Madame needed in her then state of mind; and as for him, he only looked

for worthier ears than others he had found, to have an opportunity of re-  
 counting the event with all its details; and therefore he did not spare  
 Madame a single word of the whole affair. When he had finished,

Madame said to him,—“Confess, now, that it is all a charming invention.”

"Invention, no; a true story, yes."

"Confess, whether invention or true story, that it was told to you as you  
 have told it to me, but that you were not there."

"Upon my honour, Madame, I was there."

"And you think that these confessions may have made an impression  
 on the king?"

"Certainly, as those of Mademoiselle Tonnay-Charente did upon me,"  
 replied Saint-Aignan; "do not forget, Madame, that Mademoiselle de la  
 Vallière compared the king to the sun; that was flattering enough."

"The king does not permit himself to be influenced by such flatteries."

"Madame, the king is just as much man as sun, and I saw that plain-  
 ly just now when La Vallière fell into his arms."

"La Vallière fell into the king's arms!"

"Oh, it was the most graceful picture possible! Just imagine, La  
 Vallière had fallen back fainting, and——"

"Well, what did you see? Tell me—speak!"

"I saw, what ten other people saw at the same time as myself—I saw  
 that, when La Vallière fell into his arms, the king almost fainted himself."

Madame uttered a subdued cry, the only indication of her smothered anger. "Thank you," she said, laughing in a convulsive manner; "I relate stories delightfully, M. de Saint-Aignan." And she hurried away alone and almost suffocated by her feelings, towards the château.

## CHAPTER CXIX.

### COURSES DE NUIT.

MONSIEUR had quitted the princess in the best possible humour, a feeling very fatigued, had retired to his apartments, leaving every one to finish the night as he chose. When in his room, Monsieur began to devote the night with a careful attention, which displayed itself from time to time in paroxysms of satisfaction. While his attendants were engaged dressing him, he sang the principal airs of the ballet which the violins had played, and to which the king had danced. He then summoned his tailors, inspected his costumes for the next day, and, in token of his extreme satisfaction, distributed various presents among them. As, however, the Chevalier de Lorraine, who had seen the prince return to the château, entered the room, Monsieur overwhelmed him with kindness. The form, after having saluted the prince, remained silent for a moment, like a sharpshooter who deliberates before deciding in what direction he will render his fire; then, seeming to make up his mind, he said, "Have you remarked a very singular circumstance, monseigneur?"

"No; what is it?"

"The bad reception which his majesty, in appearance, gave the Comte de Guiche."—"In appearance?"

"Yes, certainly, since, in reality, he has restored him to favour."

"I did not notice it," said the prince.

"What! did you not remark that, instead of ordering him to return to his exile, as would have been natural, he encouraged him in his opposition by permitting him to resume his place in the ballet?"

"And you think the king was wrong, chevalier?" said the prince.

"Are not you of my opinion, prince?"

"Not altogether so, my dear chevalier; and I think the king was quite right not to have made a disturbance against a poor fellow whose want of judgment is more to be complained of than his intention."

"Really," said the chevalier, "as far as I am concerned, I confess that this magnanimity astonishes me to the highest degree."

"Why so?" inquired Philip.

"Because I should have thought the king had been more jealous," replied the chevalier, spitefully. During the last few minutes Monsieur had felt there was something of an irritating nature concealed under his favourite's remarks; this last word, however, had ignited the powder.

"Jealous!" exclaimed the prince—"jealous! what do you mean? Jealous of what, if you please—or jealous of whom?"

The chevalier perceived that he had allowed one of those mischievous remarks to escape him, as he was sometimes in the habit of doing. He endeavoured, therefore, to recall it while it was still possible to do so. "Jealous of his authority," he said, with an assumed frankness; "of what else would you have the king be jealous?"

"Ah!" said the prince, "that's very proper."

"Did your royal highness," continued the chevalier, "solicit dear I Guiche's pardon?"

o, indeed," said Monsieur. "De Guiche is an excellent fellow, and courage; but as I do not approve of his conduct with Madame, I im neither harm nor good."

chevalier had assumed a bitterness with regard to De Guiche, as attempted to do with the king; but he thought that he perceived the time for indulgence, and even for the utmost indifference, had l, and that, in order to throw some light on the question, it might essary for him to put the lamp, as the saying is, under the husband's ven.

very well, very well," said the chevalier to himself, "I shall wait for ardes; he will do more in one day than I in a month; for I verily e that he is still more jealous than I am. Then, again, it is not ardes even whom I require, so much as that some event or another happen; and in the whole of this affair I see none. That De Guiche ed after he had been sent away is certainly serious enough, but all ousness disappears when I learn that De Guiche has returned at the oment Madame troubles herself no longer about him. Madame, in s occupied with the king, that is clear; but she will not be so much if, as it is asserted, the king has ceased to occupy himself about her. esult of the whole matter is, to remain perfectly quiet, and await the l of some new caprice, and let that decide the whole affair." And the lier thereupon settled himself resignedly in the arm-chair in which eur permitted him to seat himself in his presence; and, having no spiteful or malicious remarks to make, the consequence was that e chevalier's wit seemed to have deserted him. Most fortunately, Mon- was endowed with great good humour, and he had enough for two, he time arrived for dismissing his servants and gentlemen of the ber, and he passed into his sleeping apartment. As he withdrew, he d the chevalier to present his compliments to Madame, and say that, e night was cool, Monsieur, who was afraid of the toothache, would venture out again into the park during the remainder of the evening. he chevalier entered the princess's apartments at the very moment she ed them herself. He acquitted himself faithfully of the commission had been entrusted to him, and, in the first place, remarked the in- cence and annoyance with which Madame received her husband's unication—a circumstance which appeared to him fraught with hing quite fresh. If Madame had been about to leave her apart- s with that strangeness of manner about her, he would have followed but Madame was returning to them; there was nothing to be done, ore he turned upon his heel like an unemployed heron, seemed to on earth, air, and water about it, shook his head, and walked away anically in the direction of the gardens. He had hardly gone a ed paces when he met two young men, walking arm-in-arm, with heads bent down, and idly kicking the small stones out of their path y walked on, plunged in thought. It was De Guiche and De Brage-, the sight of whom, as it always did, produced upon the chevalier, ctively, a feeling of great repugnance. He did not, however, the less, ut account, salute them with a very low bow, and which they returned nterest. Then, observing that the park was becoming thinner, that luminations began to burn out, and that the morning breeze was g in, he turned to the left, and entered the château again, by one of naller courtyards. The others turned aside to the right, and con- d on their way towards the large park. As the chevalier was ascend- e side staircase, which led to the private entrance, he saw a woman

followed by another, make her appearance under the arcade which from the small to the large courtyard. The two women walked so that the rustling of their dresses could be distinguished in the darkness of the night. The style of their mantelets, their graceful figures, a ridiculous yet haughty carriage which distinguished them both, especially one who walked first, struck the chevalier.

"I certainly know those two persons," said he to himself, pausing at the top step of the small staircase. Then, as with the instinct of a bloodhound, he was about to follow them, one of his servants who had been running after him, arrested his attention.

"Monsieur," he said, "the courier has arrived."

"Very well," said the chevalier, "there is time enough; to-morrow will do."

"There are some urgent letters which you would be glad to see, perhaps."

"Where from?" inquired the chevalier.

"One from England, and the other from Calais; the latter arrived by express, and seems of great importance."

"From Calais! Who the deuce can have to write to me from Calais?"

"I think I can recognise the handwriting of your friend the Comte de Wardes."

"Oh!" cried the chevalier, forgetting his intention of acting the part of a spy, "in that case I will come up at once." This he did, while the two unknown ladies disappeared at the end of the court opposite to the one by which they had just entered. We shall now follow them, and leave the chevalier undisturbed to his correspondence. When they had arrived at the group of trees, the foremost of the two halted, somewhat out of breath, and, suddenly raising her hood, said, "Are we still far from the tree?"

"Yes, madame, more than five hundred paces; but pray rest awhile; you will not be able to walk much longer at this pace."

"You are right," said the princess, for it was she; and she leaned against a tree. "And now," she resumed, after having recovered her breath, "tell me the whole truth, and conceal nothing from me."

"Oh, madame," said the young girl, "you are already angry with me."

"No, my dear Athenais; reassure yourself, I am in no way angry with you. After all, these things do not concern me personally. You are anxious about what you may have said under the oak: you are afraid of having offended the king, and I wish to tranquillize you by ascertaining myself if it were possible you could have been overheard."

"Oh, yes, madame, the king was so close to us."

"Still, you were not speaking so loud that some of your remarks might not have been lost."

"We thought we were quite alone, madame."

"There were three of you, you say?"

"Yes; La Vallière, Montalais, and myself."

"And you, individually, spoke in a light manner of the king?"

"I am afraid so. Should such be the case, will your highness have the kindness to make my peace with his majesty?"

"If there should be any occasion for it, I promise you to do so. However, as I have already told you, it will be better not to anticipate evil, but to be quite sure that evil has been committed. The night is now very dark, and the darkness is still greater under those large trees. It is not likely you were recognised by the king. To inform him of it, by being the first to speak, is to denounce yourself."

"Oh, madame, madame! if Mademoiselle de la Vallière were re-

, I must have been recognised also. Besides, M. de Saint-Aignan  
not leave a doubt on the subject."

Did you, then, say anything very disrespectful of the king?"

Not at all so: it was one of the others who made some very flattering  
remarks about the king; and my remarks will have been so much in con-  
- with hers."

That Montalais is such a giddy girl," said Madame.

It was not Montalais. Montalais said nothing; it was La Vallière."

Madame started as if she had not known it perfectly already. "No,  
she said, "the king cannot have heard. Besides, we will now try the  
element for which we came out. Show me the oak. Do you know  
if it is?" she continued.—"Alas! madame, yes."

And you can find it again?"—"With my eyes shut."

Very well; sit down on the bank where you were, where La Vallière  
and speak in the tone and to the same effect as you did before; I  
conceal myself in the thicket, and if I can hear you, I will tell you  
—"Yes, madame."

If, therefore, you really spoke sufficiently loud for the king to have  
heard you, in that case——"

Athenais seemed to await the conclusion of the phrase with some anxiety.  
In that case," said Madame, in a suffocated voice, arising doubtless  
her hurried progress; "in that case, I forbid you——" And Ma-  
dame again increased her pace. Suddenly, however, she stopped. "An  
idea occurs to me," she said.

A good idea, no doubt, madame," replied Mademoiselle de Tonnay-  
-ente.

Montalais must be as much embarrassed as La Vallière and yourself."  
Not so, for she is less compromised, having said less."

That does not matter; she will help you, I dare say, by deviating a  
little from the exact truth."

Especially if she knows that your highness is kind enough to interest  
yourself about me."

Very well; I think I have discovered what we want."

How delightful."

You will say that all three of you were perfectly well aware that the  
king was behind the tree, or behind the thicket, whichever it might have  
been; and that you knew M. de Saint-Aignan was there too."

Yes, madame."

For you cannot disguise it from yourself, Athenais, Saint-Aignan takes  
advantage of some very flattering remarks which you made about him."

Well, madame, you see very well that one can be overheard," cried  
Athenais, "since M. de Saint-Aignan overheard us."

Madame bit her lips, for she had thoughtlessly committed herself.  
You know Saint-Aignan's character very well," she said; "the  
king shows him almost turns his brain, and he talks at random;  
not only that, he very often invents. That is not the question; the fact  
is, Did or did not the king overhear?"

Oh yes, madame, he did hear," said Athenais in despair.

In that case, do what I said: maintain boldly that all three of you  
were—mind, all three of you, for if there is a doubt about any one of  
them there will be a doubt about all,—persist, I say, that you all three  
knew that the king and M. de Saint-Aignan were there, and that you  
intended to amuse yourselves at the expense of those who were listening."

Oh, madame, at the king's expense; we never dare say that!"

"It is a simple jest ; an innocent deception readily permitted in y girls, whom men wish to take by surprise. In this manner everythi explained. What Montalais said of Malicorne, a mere jest ; what said of M. de Saint-Aignan, a mere jest, too ; and what La Vallière n have said of——"

"And which she would have given anything to have recalled."

"Are you sure of that?"——"Perfectly so."

"Very well, an additional reason, therefore. Say the whole affair a mere joke. M. de Malicorne will have no occasion to get out of terr M. de Saint-Aignan will be completely put out of countenance, he be laughed at instead of you ; and, lastly, the king will be punished a curiosity which was unworthy of his rank. Let people laugh a litt the king in this affair, and I do not think he will complain of it."

"Oh, madame, you are indeed an angel of goodness and sense."

"It is to my own advantage."——"In what way?"

"Do you ask me why it is to my advantage to spare my maid honour the remarks, annoyances, and perhaps even calumnies, w might follow? Alas ! you well know that the court has no indulgence this sort of peccadilloes. But we have now been walking for some ti shall we be long before we reach it?"

"About fifty or sixty paces further ; turn to the left, madame, if please."

"And so you are sure of Montalais?" said madame.

"Oh, certainly."——"Will she do what you ask her?"

"Everything. She will be delighted."

"As for La Vallière——" ventured the princess.

"Ah, there will be some difficulty with her, madame ; she would so to tell a falsehood."

"Yet, when it is her interest to do so——"

"I am afraid that that would not make the slightest difference in ideas."

"Yes, yes," said Madame, "I have been already told that ; she is on those over-nice and affectedly particular persons, who place heaven in foreground to conceal themselves behind it. But if she refuse to te falsehood—as she will expose herself to the jestings of the whole cou as she will have annoyed the king by a confession as ridiculous as it immodest,—Mademoiselle Labaume Leblanc de la Vallière will th it but proper that I should send her back again to her pigeons in country, in order that, in Touraine yonder, or in Le Blaisois—I know where it may be, she may at her ease study sentiment and a pastoral together." These words were uttered with a vehemence and harshn which terrified Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente ; and the consequer was, that, as far as she was concerned, she promised to tell as many fal hoods as might be necessary. It was in this amiable frame of mind, spectively, that madame and her companion reached the precincts of royal oak.

"Here we are," said Tonnay-Charente.

"We shall soon learn if one can overhear," replied Madame.

"Hush !" said the young girl, holding Madame back with a hurri gesture, entirely forgetful of her companion's rank. Madame stopped.

"You see that you can hear," said Athenais.

"How?"——"Listen."

Madame held her breath, and in fact, the following words, pronounc by a gentle and melancholy voice, floated towards them :—

tell you, vicomte, I tell you, I love her madly ; I tell you I love her distraction."

Madame started at the voice, and, beneath her hood, a bright joyous illumination shined on her features. It was she who now stayed her companion, with a light footstep leading her some twenty paces back, that is to say, out of the reach of the voice, she said : "remain there, my dear Athenais, and let no one surprise us. I think it may be you they are conjecturing about."—"Me, madame?"

"Yes, you ; or rather your adventure. I will go and listen ; if we were there, we should be discovered. Go and fetch Montalais, and then return and wait for me with her at the entrance of the forest." And then, when Athenais hesitated, she again said "Go !" in a voice which did not admit of reply. Athenais thereupon arranged her dress so as to prevent rustling being heard, and, by a path which crossed the group of trees, regained the flower-garden. As for Madame, she concealed herself in a thicket, leaning her back against a gigantic chestnut tree, one of the branches of which had been cut in a manner to form a seat, and waited full of anxiety and apprehension. "Now," she said, "since one can no longer come from this place, let us listen to what M. de Bragelonne and that other young-in-love fool, the Comte de Guiche, have to say about me."

## CHAPTER CXX.

WHICH MADAME ACQUIRES A PROOF THAT LISTENERS CAN HEAR WHAT IS SAID.

THERE was a moment's silence, as if all the mysterious sounds of night had hushed to listen, at the same time as Madame, to the youthful and passionate disclosures of De Guiche.

It was Raoul who was about to speak. He leaned indolently against the trunk of the large oak, and replied in his sweet and musical voice, "Yes, my dear Guiche, it is a great misfortune."

"Yes," cried the latter, "great indeed."

"You do not understand me, Guiche. I say that it is a great misfortune for you, not that of loving, but that of not knowing how to conceal your passion."—"What do you mean?" said Guiche.

"Yes, you do not perceive one thing ; namely, that it is no longer to your only friend you have,—in other words,—to a man who would rather betray you ; you do not perceive, I say, that it is no longer to your only friend that you confide your passion, but to the first one who approaches you."

"Are you mad, Bragelonne," exclaimed Guiche, "to say such a thing to me?"—"The fact is so, however."

"Impossible ! How, in what manner could I have become indiscreet enough to do such an extent?"

"I mean, that your eyes, your looks, your sighs, speak, in spite of yourself ; that every exaggerated feeling leads and hurries a man beyond his control. In such a case he ceases to be master of himself ; he is a prey to his mad passion, which makes him confide his grief to the trees, or to the wind. From the very moment he has no longer any living being within reach of his voice. Besides, remember this, it very rarely happens that there is not some one present to hear, especially those very things which ought to be heard." Guiche uttered a deep sigh. "Nay," continued Bragelonne, "you distress me ; since your return here, you have a thousand

times, and in a thousand different ways, confessed your love for her ; and yet, had you not said anything, your return would alone have been a terrible indiscretion. I persist, then, in drawing this conclusion ; that if you do not place a greater watch over yourself than you have hitherto done one day or another something will happen which will cause an explosion. Who will save you then ? Answer me ? Who will save her ?—for, innocent as she will be of your affection, your affection will be an accusation against her in the hands of her enemies.”

“ Alas ! ” murmured Guiche ; and a deep sigh accompanied the exclamation.

“ That is not answering me, Guiche. ” — “ Yes, yes. ”

“ Well, what reply have you to make ? ”

“ This, that when that day arrives I shall not be less a living being than I feel myself to be now. ”

“ I do not understand you. ”

“ So many vicissitudes have worn me out. At present, I am no more thinking, acting being ; at present, the most worthless of men is better than I am ; therefore, my remaining strength is now exhausted, my later formed resolutions have vanished, and I abandon myself to my fate. When a man is out campaigning, as we have been together, and he sets off alone and unaccompanied for a skirmish, it sometimes happens that he may meet with a party of five or six foragers, and although alone, he defends himself ; afterwards, five or six others arrive unexpectedly, his anger is aroused and he persists ; but if six, eight, or ten others should still be met with, he either sets spurs to his horse, if he should still happen to retain it, or lets himself be slain to save an ignominious flight. Such indeed, is my own case ; first I had to struggle against myself ; afterwards against Buckingham ; now, since the king is in the field, I will not contend against the king, nor even, I wish you to understand, will the king retire ; nor even against the nature of that woman. Still, I do not deceive myself ! having devoted myself to the service of that affection, I will lose my life in it. ”

“ It is not her you ought to reproach, ” replied Raoul ; “ it is yourself. ”

“ Why so ? ”

“ You know the princess’s character,—somewhat giddy, easily captivated by novelty, susceptible to flattery, whether it come from a blind person or a child, and yet you allow your passion for her to eat your very life away. Look at her,—love her, if you will,—for no one whose heart is not engaged elsewhere can see her without loving her. Yet, while you love her, respect, in the first place, her husband’s rank, then himself, and lastly, your own safety. ”

“ Thanks Raoul. ” — “ For what ? ”

“ Because, seeing how much I suffer from this woman, you endeavour to console me, because you tell me all the good of her you think, and perhaps even that which you do not think. ”

“ Oh, ” said Raoul, “ there you are wrong, Guiche ; what I think I do not always say, but in that case I say nothing ; but when I speak, I know not either how to feign or to deceive ; and whoever listens to me must believe me. ”

During this conversation, Madame, her head stretched forward with eager ear and dilated glance, endeavouring to penetrate the obscurely thirstily drank in the faintest sound of their voices.

“ Oh, I know her better than you do, then ! ” exclaimed Guiche. “ She is not giddy, but frivolous ; she is not attracted by novelty—she

ly oblivious, and is without faith ; she is not simply susceptible to pity—she is a practised and cruel coquette ; a thorough coquette ! yes, I am sure of it. Believe me, Bragelonne, I am suffering all the tortments of hell. Brave, passionately fond of danger, I meet a danger greater than my strength and my courage ; but, believe me, Raoul, I reserve for myself a victory which shall cost her floods of tears.”

“A victory,” he asked, “of what kind?”

“Of what kind, you ask?”—“Yes.”

“One day I will accost her, and will address her thus : ‘I was young and madly in love ; I possessed, however, sufficient respect to throw myself at your feet, and to prostrate myself with my forehead buried in the dust, but your looks had not raised me to your hand. I fancied I understood your looks, I arose, and then, without having done anything towards you in love you yet more devotedly, if that were possible, you, a woman without heart, faith, or love, in very wantonness of disposition, dashed me down again from mere caprice. You are unworthy, princess of the royal blood though you may be, of the love of a man of honour. I offer my life as a sacrifice for having loved you too tenderly, and I die hating you.’”

“Oh !” cried Raoul, terrified at the accents of profound truth which Guiche’s words betrayed, “I was right in saying you were mad, Guiche.”

“Yes, yes,” exclaimed De Guiche, following out his own idea, “since there are no wars here now, I will flee yonder to the north, seek service in the Empire, where some Hungarian, or Croat, or Turk, will perhaps cruelly put me out of my misery at once.” De Guiche did not finish, or rather, as he finished, a sound made him start, and at the same moment made Raoul leap to his feet. As for De Guiche, buried in his own thoughts, he remained seated, with his head tightly pressed between his hands. The branches of the tree were pushed aside, and a woman, pale and much agitated, appeared before the two young men. With one hand she held back the branches, which would have struck her face, and with the other she raised the hood of the mantle which covered her shoulders. By her fair and lustrous glance, by her lofty carriage, by her haughty attitude, and more than all by the throbbing of his own heart, De Guiche recognised Madame, and, uttering a loud cry, he removed his hands from his temples, and covered his eyes with them. Raoul, trembling and out of countenance, merely muttered a few formal words of respect.

“Monsieur de Bragelonne,” said the princess, “have the goodness, I beg, to see if my attendants are not somewhere yonder, either in the walks or in the groves ; and you, M. de Guiche, remain here—I am tired, and you will perhaps give me your arm.”

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of the unhappy young man, he could have been less terrified than by her cold and severe tone. However, as he himself had just said, he was brave ; and as in the depths of his own heart he had just decisively made up his mind, De Guiche arose, and, observing Bragelonne’s hesitation, he turned towards him a glance full of resignation and of grateful acknowledgment. Instead of immediately answering Madame, he even advanced a step towards the vicomte, and, holding out towards him the hand which the princess had just desired him to give her, he pressed his friend’s hand in his own with a sigh, in which he seemed to give to friendship all life that was left in the depths of his heart. Madame, who, in her pride, had never known what it was to wait, now waited until this mute colloquy was ended. Her royal hand remained suspended in the air, and, when Raoul had left, it sank without anger, but not without emotion, in that of De Guiche. They were alone

in the depths of the dark and silent forest, and nothing could be heard but Raoul's hastily retreating footsteps along the obscure paths. Over their heads was extended the thick and fragrant vault of branches, through the occasional openings of which the stars could be seen glittering in the beauty. Madame softly drew De Guiche about a hundred paces away from that indiscreet tree which had heard, and had allowed so many things to be heard, during that evening, and, leading him to a neighbouring glade, so that they could see a certain distance around them, she said, in a trembling voice, "I have brought you here, because yonder, where you were, everything can be overheard."

"Everything can be overheard, did you say, madame?" replied the young man, mechanically.—"Yes."

"Which means——" murmured De Guiche.

"Which means that I have heard every syllable you have said."

"Oh, Heaven! this only was wanting to destroy me," stammered De Guiche; and he bent down his head, like an exhausted swimmer beneath the wave which engulfs him.

"And so," she said, "you judge me as you have said?" Guiche grew pale, turned his head aside, and was silent; he felt almost on the point of fainting.

"I do not complain," continued the princess, in a tone of voice full of gentleness; "I prefer a frankness which wounds me, to flattery which would deceive me. And so, according to your opinion, M. de Guiche, am I a coquette and a worthless creature?"

"Worthless!" cried the young man—"you worthless! No, no; most certainly I did not say, I could not have said, that that which was the most precious object in life for me could be worthless. No, no; I did not say that."

"A woman who sees a man perish, consumed by the fire she has kindled and who does not allay that fire, is, in my opinion, a worthless woman."

"What can it matter to you what I said?" returned the comte. "What am I compared to you, and why should you even trouble yourself to know whether I exist or not?"

"Monsieur de Guiche, both you and I are human beings, and, knowing you as I do, I do not wish you to risk your life. With you I will change my conduct and character: I will be, not frank, for I am always so, but truthful. I implore you, therefore, to love me no more, and to forget utterly that I have ever addressed a word or a glance towards you."

De Guiche turned round, bending a look full of passionate devotion upon her. "You," he said, "you excuse yourself! you implore me!"

"Certainly; since I have done the evil, I ought to repair the evil I have done. And so, comte, this is what we have agreed to: you will forgive my frivolity and my coquetry—nay, do not interrupt me—I will forgive you for having said I was frivolous and a coquette, or something worse perhaps; and you will renounce your idea of dying, and will preserve for your family, for the king, and for our sex, a cavalier whom every one esteems, and whom many hold dear." Madame pronounced this last word in such an accent of frankness, and even of tenderness, that poor De Guiche's heart felt almost bursting.

"Oh! madame, madame!" he stammered out.

"Nay, listen further," she continued. "When you shall have renounced all thought of me for ever, from necessity in the first place, and, afterwards because you will yield to my entreaty, then you will judge me more favourably, and I am convinced you will replace this love—forgive the

y of the expression—by a sincere friendship, which you will be ready to offer me, and which, I promise you, shall be cordially accepted.” De Guiche, his forehead bedewed with perspiration, a feeling of death at his heart, and a trembling agitation through his whole frame, bit his lip, stamped his foot on the ground, and, in a word, devoured the bitterness of his grief. “Madame,” he said, “what you offer is impossible, and I cannot accept such conditions.”

“What !” said Madame, “do you refuse my friendship, then?”

“No, no ! I need not your friendship, madame ; I prefer to die from love than to live for friendship.”——“Comte !”

“Oh ! madame,” cried De Guiche, “the present is a moment for me in which no other consideration and no other respect exist, than the consideration and respect of a man of honour towards the woman he worships. Drive me away, curse me, denounce me, you will be perfectly right ; I have uttered complaints against you, but their bitterness has been owing to my passion for you ; I have said that I would die, and die I shall. If I lived, you would forget me ; but dead, you would never forget me, I am sure.”

And yet she, who was standing buried in thought, and as agitated as De Guiche himself, turned aside her head as he but a minute before had turned aside his. Then, after a moment’s pause, she said, “And you love me, then, very much ?”

“Madly ; madly enough to die from it, whether you drive me from you, or whether you listen to me still.”

“It is, therefore, a hopeless case,” she said, in a playful manner ; “a case which must be treated with soothing applications. Give me your hand. It is as cold as ice.” De Guiche knelt down, and pressed to his lips, not one, but both of Madame’s hands.

“Love me, then,” said the princess, “since it cannot be otherwise.” And almost imperceptibly she pressed his fingers, raising him thus, partly in the manner of a queen, and partly as a fond and affectionate woman would have done. De Guiche trembled throughout, from head to foot, and Madame, who felt how passion coursed through every fibre of his being, knew that he indeed loved truly. “Give me your arm, comte,” she said, “and let us return.”

“Ah ! madame,” said the comte, trembling and bewildered ; “you have discovered a third way of killing me.”

“But, happily, it is the longest, is it not ?” she replied, as she led him towards the grove of trees she had left.

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## CHAPTER CXXI.

### ARAMIS’S CORRESPONDENCE.

WHILST De Guiche’s affairs, which had been suddenly set to rights without his having been able to guess the cause of their improvement, assumed that unexpected change which we have seen Raoul, in obedience to the request of H. R. H. had withdrawn in order not to interrupt an explanation, the results of which he was far from guessing, and he had joined the ladies of honour who were walking about in the flower-gardens. During his time, the Chevalier de Lorraine, who had returned to his own room, read De Wardes’ letter with surprise, for it informed him, by the hand of his valet, of the sword-thrust received at Calais, and of all the details of the adventure, and invited him to communicate to De Guiche and to Mon-

sieur, whatever there might be in the affair likely to be most disagreeable to both of them. De Wardes particularly endeavoured to prove to the chevalier the violence of Madame's affection for Buckingham, and he finished his letter by declaring that he thought this feeling was returned. The chevalier shrugged his shoulders at the latter paragraph, and, in fact De Wardes was very much behindhand, as may have been seen. De Wardes was still only at Buckingham's affair. The chevalier threw the letter over his shoulder upon an adjoining table, and said in a disdainful tone :—"It is really incredible ; and yet poor De Wardes is not deficient in ability ; but the truth is, it is not very apparent, so easy is it to grow rusty in the country. The deuce take the simpleton, who ought to have written to me about matters of importance, and who writes such silly stuff as that. If it had not been for that miserable letter, which has no meaning at all in it, I should have detected in the grove yonder a charming little intrigue, which would have compromised a woman, would have perhaps been as good as a sword-thrust for a man, and have diverted Monsieur for some days to come."

He looked at his watch. "It is now too late," he said. "One o'clock in the morning ; every one must have returned to the king's apartments, where the night is to be finished ; well, the scent is lost, and, unless some extraordinary chance——" And, thus saying, as if to appeal to his good star, the chevalier, much out of temper, approached the window, which looked out upon a somewhat solitary part of the garden. Immediately, and as if some evil genius had been at his orders, he perceived returning towards the château, accompanied by a man, a silk mantle of a dark colour and recognised the figure which had struck his attention half an hour previously.

"Admirable !" he thought, striking his hands together, "this is my mysterious affair." And he started out precipitately along the staircase, hoping to reach the courtyard in time to recognise the woman in the mantle, and her companion. But, as he arrived at the door in the little court, he nearly knocked against Madame, whose radiant face seemed full of charming revelations beneath the mantle which protected without concealing her. Unfortunately, Madame was alone. The chevalier knew that since he had seen her, not five minutes before, with a gentleman, the gentleman in question could not be far off. Consequently, he hardly took time to salute the princess as he drew up, to allow her to pass ; then, when she had advanced a few steps, with the rapidity of a woman who fears recognition, and when the chevalier perceived that she was too much occupied with her own thoughts to trouble herself about him, he darted into the garden, looked hastily round on every side, and embraced within his glance as much of the horizon as he possibly could. He was just in time ; the gentleman who had accompanied Madame was still in sight ; only he was rapidly hurrying towards one of the wings of the *château*, behind which he was just on the point of disappearing. There was not a minute to lose. The chevalier darted in pursuit of him, prepared to slacken his pace as he approached the unknown ; but, in spite of the diligence he used, the unknown had disappeared behind the flight of steps before he approached.

It was evident, however, that as he whom the chevalier pursued was walking quietly, in a very pensive manner, with his head bent down, either beneath the weight of grief or of happiness ; when once the angle was passed, unless, indeed, he were to enter by some door or another, the chevalier could not fail to overtake him. And this, certainly, would have happened, if, at the very moment he turned the angle, the chevalier had

run against two persons, who were themselves turning it in the opposite direction. The chevalier was quite ready to seek a quarrel with these two troublesome intruders, when looking up he recognised the surintendant. Fouquet was accompanied by a person whom the chevalier now saw for the first time. This stranger was his grace the bishop of Vannes. Checked at the important character of the individual, and obliged from politeness to make his own excuses when he expected to receive them, the chevalier stepped back a few paces; and as Monsieur Fouquet possessed, if not the friendship, at least the respect of every one; as the king himself, although he was rather his enemy than his friend, treated M. Fouquet as a man of great consideration, the chevalier did, what the king would have done, namely, he bowed to M. Fouquet, who returned his salutation with kindly politeness, perceiving that the gentleman had run against him by mistake and without any intention of being rude. Then, almost immediately afterwards, having recognised the Chevalier de Lorraine, he made a few civil remarks, to which the chevalier was obliged to reply. Brief as the conversation was, the Chevalier de Lorraine, saw, with the most unfeigned displeasure, the figure of his unknown becoming less and less in the distance, and fast disappearing in the darkness. The chevalier resigned, himself, and, once resigned, gave his entire attention to Fouquet:—"You arrive late, monsieur," he said. "Your absence has occasioned great surprise, and I heard Monsieur express himself as much astonished, that, having been invited by the king, you had not come."

"It was impossible for me to do so; but I came as soon as I was free."

"Is Paris quiet?"

"Perfectly so. Paris has received the last tax very well."

"Ah! I understand, you wished to assure yourself of this good feeling before you came to participate in our *fêtes*."

"I have arrived, however, somewhat late to enjoy them. I will ask you, therefore, to inform me if the king is within the *château* or not, if I shall be able to see him this evening, or if I am to wait until to-morrow."

"We have lost sight of his majesty during the last half-hour nearly," said the chevalier.

"Perhaps he is in Madame's apartments," inquired Fouquet.

"Not in Madame's apartments, I should think, for I have just met Madame as she was entering by the small staircase; and unless the gentleman whom you just now passed was the king himself——" and the chevalier paused, hoping that, in this manner, he might learn who it was he had been hurrying after. But Fouquet, whether he had or had not recognised De Guiche, simply replied, "No, monsieur, it was not he."

The chevalier, disappointed in his expectation, saluted them; but as he did so, casting a parting glance around him, and perceiving M. Colbert in the centre of a group, he said to the surintendant: "Stay, monsieur; there is some one under the trees yonder, who will be able to inform you better than myself."

"Who?" asked Fouquet, whose near-sightedness prevented his seeing through the darkness.

"M. Colbert," returned the chevalier.

"Indeed! That person, then, who is speaking yonder to those men with torches in their hands, is M. Colbert?"

"M. Colbert himself. He is giving his orders personally to the workmen who are arranging the lamps for the illuminations."

"Thank you," said Fouquet, with an inclination of the head, which indicated that he had obtained all the information he wished. The chevalier,

on his side, having, on the contrary, learnt nothing at all, withdrew with profound salutation.

He had scarcely left, when Fouquet, knitting his brows, fell into a reverie. Aramis looked at him for a moment with a mingled feeling of compassion and sadness. "What!" he said to him, "that man's name alone seems to affect you. Is it possible, that, full of triumph and delight as you were just now, the sight merely of that man is capable of dispiriting you? Tell me, have you faith in your good star?"—"No," replied Fouquet, dejectedly.

"Why not?"

"Because I am too full of happiness at this present moment," he replied in a trembling voice. "You, my dear D'Herblay, who are so learned, will remember the history of a certain tyrant of Samos. What can I throw into the sea to avert approaching evil? Yes! I repeat it once more, I am too full of happiness! so happy, that I wish for nothing beyond what I have. . . . I have risen so high. . . . You know my motto: '*Quo non ascendam?*' I have risen so high that nothing is left me but to descend from my elevation. I cannot believe in the progress of a success which is already more than human."

Aramis smiled as he fixed his kind and penetrating glance upon him. "If I were aware of the cause of your happiness," he said, "I should probably fear for your disgrace; but you regard me in the light of a true friend; I mean, you turn to me in misfortune, nothing more. Even that is an immense and precious boon, I know; but the truth is, I have a just right to beg you to confide in me, from time to time, any fortunate circumstances which may befall you, and in which I should rejoice, you know more than if they had befallen myself."

"My dear prelate," said Fouquet, laughing, "my secrets are of too profane a character to confide them to a bishop, however great a worldling he may be."—"Bah! in confession."

"Oh! I should blush too much if you were my confessor." And Fouquet began to sigh. Aramis again looked at him without any other betrayal of his thoughts than a quiet smile.

"Well," he said, "discretion is a great virtue."

"Silence," said Fouquet, "that venomous beast has recognised us, and is coming this way."—"Colbert?"

"Yes; leave me, D'Herblay; I do not wish that fellow to see you with me, or he will take an aversion to you."

Aramis pressed his hand, saying, "What need have I of his friendship, while you are here?"

"Yes, but I may not be always here," replied Fouquet, dejectedly.

"On that day, then, if that day should ever come," said Aramis, tranquilly, "we will think over a means of dispensing with the friendship, or of braving the dislike, of M. Colbert. But tell me, my dear Fouquet, instead of conversing with this fellow, as you did him the honour to style him, a conversation the utility of which I do not perceive, why do you not pay a visit, if not to the king, at least to Madame?"

"To Madame!" said the surintendant, his mind occupied by his *souvenirs*.—"Yes, certainly, to Madame."

"You remember," continued Aramis, "that we have been told that Madame stands high in favour during the last two or three days. It enters into your policy, and forms part of our plans, that you should assiduously devote yourself to his majesty's friends. It is a means of counteracting the growing influence of M. Colbert. Present yourself, therefore,

soon as possible, to Madame, and, for our sakes, treat this ally with consideration."

"But," said Fouquet, "are you quite sure that it is upon her the king's his eyes fixed at the present moment?"

"If the needle has turned, it must be since the morning. You know I've my police."

"Very well! I go there at once, and, at all events, I shall have a means of introduction, in the shape of a magnificent pair of antique cameos set with diamonds."

"I have seen them, and nothing could be more costly and regal."

At this moment they were interrupted by a servant followed by a courier. For you, monseigneur," said the courier aloud, presenting a letter to Fouquet.

"For your grace," said the lackey in a low tone, handing Aramis a letter. And as the lackey carried a torch in his hand, he placed himself between the surintendant and the Bishop of Vannes, so that both of them could read at the same time. As Fouquet looked at the fine and delicate writing on the envelope, he started with delight; they who love, or who are beloved, will understand his anxiety in the first place, and his happiness in the next. He hastily tore open the letter, which, however, contained only these words: "It is but an hour since I quitted you, it is an hour since I told you that I love you." And that was all. Madame de Vallière had, in fact, left Fouquet about an hour previously, after having passed two days with him; and, apprehensive lest his remembrance of her might not be effaced for too long a period from the heart she regretted, she despatched a courier to him as the bearer of this important communication. Fouquet kissed the letter, and rewarded the bearer with a handful of gold. As for Aramis, he, on his side, was engaged in reading, but with more coolness and reflection, the following letter:

"The king has this evening been struck with a strange fancy; a woman loves him. He learnt it accidentally, as he was listening to the conversation of this young girl with her companions; and his majesty has entirely abandoned himself to this new caprice. The girl's name is Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and she is sufficiently pretty to warrant this caprice becoming a strong attachment. Beware of Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

There was not a word about Madame. Aramis slowly folded the letter and put it in his pocket. Fouquet was still engaged in inhaling the perfume of his epistle.

"Monseigneur," said Aramis, touching Fouquet's arm.

"Yes; what is it?" he asked.

"An idea has just occurred to me. Are you acquainted with a young girl of the name of La Vallière?"

"Not at all."—"Reflect a little."

"Ah! yes, I believe so, one of Madame's maids of honour."

"That must be the one."—"Well, what then?"

"Well, monseigneur, it is to that young girl that you must pay your court this evening."

"Bah! why so?"

"Nay, more than that, it is to her you must present your cameos."

"Nonsense."

"You know, monseigneur, that my advice is not to be regarded lightly."

"Yet this unforeseen——"

"That is my affair. Pay your court in due form, and without loss of

time, to Mademoiselle de la Vallière. I will be your guarantee with Madame de Bellière that your devotion is altogether politic."

"What do you mean, my dear D'Herblay, and whose name have you just pronounced?"

"A name which ought to convince you that, as I am so well informed about yourself, I may possibly be as well informed about others. Pay your court, therefore, to La Vallière."

"I will pay my court to whomsoever you like," replied Fouquet, his heart filled with happiness.

"Come, come, descend again to the earth, traveller of the seventh heaven," said Aramis; "M. de Colbert is approaching. He has been recruiting while we were reading; see, how he is surrounded, praised, congratulated; he is decidedly becoming powerful." In fact, Colbert was advancing, escorted by all the courtiers who remained in the gardens, every one of whom complimented him upon the arrangements of the *fête*, and which so puffed him up, that he could hardly contain himself.

"If La Fontaine were here," said Fouquet, smiling, "what an admirable opportunity for him to recite his fable of 'The Frog that wished to make itself as big as the Ox.'"

Colbert arrived, in the centre of a circle blazing with light; Fouquet awaited his approach, unmoved, and with a slightly mocking smile. Colbert smiled too; he had been observing his enemy during the last quarter of an hour, and had been approaching him gradually. Colbert's smile was a presage of hostility.

"Ch! oh!" said Aramis, in a low tone to the surintendant; "the scoundrel is going to ask you again for a few more millions to pay for his fireworks and his coloured lamps." Colbert was the first to salute them, and with an air which he endeavoured to render respectful. Fouquet hardly moved his head.

"Well, monseigneur, what do your eyes say? Have we shown our good taste?"

"Perfect taste," replied Fouquet, without permitting the slightest tone of raillery to be remarked in his words.

"Oh!" said Colbert, maliciously, "you are treating us with indulgence. We are poor, we other servants of the king, and Fontainebleau is no way to be compared as a residence with Vaux."

"Quite true," replied Fouquet, coolly.

"But what can we do, monseigneur?" continued Colbert; "we have done our best without slender resources." Fouquet made a gesture of assent.

"But," pursued Colbert, "it would be only a proper display of your magnificence, monseigneur, if you were to offer to his majesty a *fête* in your wonderful gardens—in those gardens which have cost you sixty millions of francs."—"Seventy-two," said Fouquet.

"An additional reason," returned Colbert; "it would, indeed, be truly magnificent."

"But do you suppose, monsieur, that his majesty would deign to accept my invitation?"

"I have no doubt whatever of it," cried Colbert, hastily, "I will guarantee that he does."

"You are exceedingly kind," said Fouquet. "I may depend on it, then?"

"Yes, monseigneur; yes, certainly."

"Then I will consider of it," said Fouquet.

"Accept, accept," whispered Aramis eagerly.

"You will consider of it?" repeated Colbert.

"Yes," replied Fouquet ; " in order to know what day I shall submit invitation to the king."  
 " This very evening, monseigneur, this very evening."  
 " Agreed," said the surintendant. " Gentlemen, I should wish to issue invitations ; but you know, that, wherever the king goes, the king is in own palace ; it is by his majesty, therefore, that you must be invited." A murmur of delight immediately arose. Fouquet bowed and left.  
 " Proud and haughty man," said Colbert, " you accept, and you know it cost you ten millions."  
 " You have ruined me," said Fouquet, in a low tone to Aramis.  
 " I have saved you," replied the latter, whilst Fouquet ascended the flight of steps and inquired whether the king was still visible.

## CHAPTER CXXII.

### THE ORDERLY CLERK.

THE king, anxious to be again quite alone, in order to reflect well upon what was passing in his heart, had withdrawn to his own apartments, where Saint-Aignan had, after his conversation with Madame, gone to meet him. This conversation has already been related. The favourite, in view of his twofold importance, and feeling that he had become, during the last two hours, the confidant of the king, began to treat the affairs of the court in a somewhat indifferent manner ; and, from the position in which he had placed himself, or rather, where chance had placed him, he saw nothing but love and garlands of flowers around him. The king's love for Madame, that of Madame for the king, that of Guiche for Madame, that of La Vallière for the king, that of Malicorne for Montalais, that of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente for himself, was not all this, truly, more than enough to turn the head of any courtier ? Besides, Saint-Aignan was the model of all courtiers, past, present, and future ; and, moreover, Saint-Aignan showed himself such an excellent narrator, and so discerningly appreciative, that the king listened to him with an appearance of great interest, particularly when he described the excited manner with which Madame had sought for him to converse about the affair of Mademoiselle de la Vallière. When the king no longer experienced for Madame any remains of the passion he had once felt for her, there was, in this same eagerness of Madame to procure information about him, such a gratification for his vanity, from which he could not free himself. He experienced his gratification, then, but nothing more ; and his heart was not, for a single moment, alarmed at what Madame might, or might not, think of his adventure. When, however, Saint-Aignan had finished, the king, while preparing to retire to rest, asked, " Now, Saint-Aignan, you know what Mademoiselle de la Vallière is, do you not ?"  
 " Not only what she is, but what she will be."  
 " What do you mean ?"  
 " I mean, that she is everything that a woman can wish to be, that is to-day, beloved by your majesty ; I mean, that she will be everything your majesty may wish her to be."  
 " That is not what I am asking. I do not wish to know what she is to-day, or what she will be to-morrow ; as you have remarked, that is my affair. But tell me what others say of her."  
 " They say she is well-conducted."  
 " Oh !" said the king, smiling, " that is but report."

"But rare enough, at court, sire, to believe it when it is spread."

"Perhaps you are right. Is she well-born?"

"Excellently so; the daughter of the Marquis de la Vallière, and step-daughter of that good M. de Saint-Remy."

"Ah! yes, my aunt's major-domo; I remember it; and I remember now, that I saw her as I passed through Blois. She was presented to the queens. I have even to reproach myself, that I did not, on that occasion, pay her all the attention she deserved."

"Oh! sire, I trust that your majesty will repair the time you have lost."

"And the report—you tell me—is, that Mademoiselle de la Vallière never had a lover."

"In any case, I do not think your majesty would be much alarmed at the rivalry."

"Yet stay," said the king, in a very serious tone of voice.

"Your majesty?"

"I remember."—"Ah!"

"If she has no lover, she has, at least, a betrothed."

"A betrothed!"

"What! count, do not you know that?"—"No."

"You, the man who knows all the news?"

"Your majesty will excuse me. Your majesty knows this betrothed, then?"

"Assuredly! his father came to ask me to sign the marriage contract; it is——" The king was about to pronounce the Vicomte de Bragelonne's name, when he stopped, and knitted his brows.

"It is——" repeated Saint-Aignan, inquiringly.

"I don't remember now," replied Louis XIV., endeavouring to conceal an annoyance which he had some trouble to disguise.

"Can I put your majesty in the way?" inquired the Comte de Saint-Aignan.

"No; for I no longer remember to whom I intended to refer; indeed, I only remember, very indistinctly, that one of the maids of honour, was to marry——, the name, however, has escaped me."

"Was it Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente he was going to marry?" inquired Saint-Aignan.

"Very likely," said the king.

"In that case the intended was M. de Montespan; but Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente did not speak of it, it seemed to me, in such a manner as would frighten suitors away."

"At all events," said the king, "I know nothing, or almost nothing, about Mademoiselle de la Vallière. Saint-Aignan, I rely upon you to procure me some information about her."

"Yes, sire, and when shall I have the honour of seeing your majesty again, to give you the information?"

"Whenever you shall have procured it."

"I shall obtain it speedily, then, if the information can be as quickly obtained as my wish to see your majesty again."

"Well said, count! By the bye, has Madame displayed any ill-feeling against this poor girl?"—"None, sire."

"Madame did not get angry, then?"

"I do not know; I only know that she laughed continually."

"That's well; but I think I hear voices in the anterooms—no doubt a courier has just arrived. Inquire, Saint-Aignan." The count ran to the door and exchanged a few words with the usher; he returned to the king,

ng, "Sire, it is M. Fouquet who has this moment arrived, by your majesty's orders, he says. He presented himself, but because of the advanced hour; he does not press for an audience this evening, and is satisfied to have his presence here formally announced."

M. Fouquet! I wrote to him at three o'clock, inviting him to be at Fontainebleau the following morning, and he arrives at Fontainebleau at three o'clock. This is, indeed, zeal!" exclaimed the king, delighted to see himself so promptly obeyed. "On the contrary, M. Fouquet shall have an audience. I summoned him, and will receive him. Let him be introduced. As for you, count, pursue your inquiries, and be here to-morrow." The king placed his finger on his lips; and Saint-Aignan, his heart full of happiness, hastily withdrew, telling the usher to introduce M. Fouquet, who, thereupon, entered the king's apartment. Louis rose to receive him.

Good evening, M. Fouquet," he said, smiling graciously; "I congratulate you on your punctuality; and yet my message must have reached late?"—"At nine in the evening, sire."

You have been working very hard, lately, M. Fouquet, for I have been informed that you have not left your rooms at Saint-Mandé during the three or four days."

It is perfectly true, your majesty, that I have kept myself shut up for past three days," replied Fouquet.

Do you know, M. Fouquet, that I had a great many things to say to you?" continued the king, with a most gracious air.

Your majesty overwhelms me, and since you are so graciously disposed towards me, will your majesty permit me to remind you of the promise your majesty made to grant me an audience?"

Ah! yes; some church dignitary, who thinks he has to thank me for something, is it not?"

Precisely so, sire. The hour is, perhaps, badly chosen; but the time when the companion whom I have brought with me is valuable, and as Fontainebleau is on the way to his diocese——"

Who is it, then?"

The last bishop of Vannes, whose appointment your majesty, at my recommendation, deigned, three months since, to sign."

"That is very possible," said the king, who had signed without reading; and is he here?"

"Yes, sire; Vannes is an important diocese; the flock belonging to its pastor need his religious consolation; they are savages, whom it is necessary to polish, at the same time that he instructs them, and M. d'Herblay is unequalled in such kind of missions."

"M. d'Herblay!" said the king, musingly, as if his name, heard long since, was not, however, unknown to him.

"Oh!" said Fouquet, promptly, "your majesty is not acquainted with the true name of one of your most faithful and most valuable servants?"

"No, I confess I am not. And so he wishes to set off again?"

"He has this very day received letters which will, perhaps, compel him to leave; so that, before setting off for that unknown region called Breizh, he is desirous of paying his respects to your majesty."

"Is he waiting?"—"He is here, sire."

"Let him enter."

Fouquet made a sign to the usher in attendance, who was waiting behind the tapestry. The door opened, and Aramis entered. The king bowed him to finish the compliments which he addressed to him, and

fixed a long look upon a countenance which no one could forget, after having once beheld it.

"Vannes !" he said : "you are bishop of Vannes, I believe ?"

"Yes, sire."—"Vannes is in Bretagne, I think ?" Aramis bowed.

"Near the coast ?" Aramis again bowed.

"A few leagues from Belle-Isle, is it not ?"

"Yes, sire," replied Aramis ; "six leagues, I believe."

"Six leagues ; a mere step, then," said Louis XIV.

"Not for us poor Bretons, sire," replied Aramis ; "six leagues, on the contrary, is a great distance, if it be six leagues on land ; and an immense distance, if it be leagues on the sea. Besides, I have the honour to mention to your majesty that there are six leagues of sea from the river to Belle-Isle."

"It is said that M. Fouquet has a very beautiful house there ?" inquired the king.

"Yes, it is said so," said Aramis, looking quietly at Fouquet.

"What do you mean by 'it is said so ?'" exclaimed the king.

"He has, sire."

"Really, M. Fouquet, I must confess that one circumstance surprises me."—"What may that be, sire ?"

"That you should have at the head of your parishes a man like M. d'Herblay, and yet should not have shown him Belle-Isle ?"

"Oh, sire," replied the bishop, without giving Fouquet time to answer.

"we poor Breton prelates seldom leave our residences."

"M. de Vannes," said the king, "I will punish M. Fouquet for his indifference."

"In what way, sire ?"—"I will change your bishopric."

Fouquet bit his lips, but Aramis only smiled.

"What income does Vannes bring you in ?" continued the king.

"Sixty thousand livres, sire," said Aramis.

"So trifling an amount as that ; but you possess other property, Monsieur de Vannes ?"

"I have nothing else, sire ; only M. Fouquet pays me one thousand two hundred livres a year for his pew in the church."

"Well, M. d'Herblay, I promise you something better than that."

"Sire"—"I will not forget you."

Aramis bowed, and the king also bowed to him in a respectful manner as he was always accustomed to do towards women and members of the Church. Aramis gathered that his audience was at an end ; he took his leave of the king in the simple, unpretending language of a country pastor, and disappeared.

"His is, indeed, a remarkable face," said the king, following him with his eyes as long as he could see him, and even to a certain degree when he was no longer to be seen.

"Sire," replied Fouquet, "if that bishop had been educated early in life, no prelate in the kingdom would deserve the highest distinctions better than he."

"His learning is not extensive, then ?"

"He changed the sword for the priest's garments, and that rather late in life. But it matters little, if your majesty will permit me to speak of M. de Vannes again on another occasion——"

"I beg you to do so. But, before speaking of him, let us speak of yourself, M. Fouquet."

"Of me, sire ?"—"Yes, I have to pay you a thousand compliments."

"I cannot express to your majesty the delight with which you overwhelm me."

"I understand you, M. Fouquet. I confess, however, to have had certain judices against you."

"In that case, I was indeed unhappy, sire."

"But they exist no longer. Did you not perceive——"

"I did indeed, sire ; but I awaited with resignation the day when truth should prevail ; and it seems that that day has now arrived."

"Ah ! you knew, then, you were in disgrace with me ?"

"Alas ! sire, I perceived it."

"And do you know the reason ?"

"Perfectly well ; your majesty thought that I had been wastefully lavish in my expenditure."——"Not so ; far from that."

"Or, rather, an indifferent administrator. In a word, your majesty thought that, as the people had no money, there would be none for your majesty either."

"Yes, I thought so ; but I was deceived." Fouquet bowed.

"And no disturbances, no complaints ?"

"And money enough," said Fouquet.

"The fact is, that you have been profuse with it during the last month."

"I have more still, not only for all your majesty's requirements, but for your caprices."

"I thank you, Monsieur Fouquet," replied the king seriously. "I will not put you to the proof. For the next two months I do not intend to ask you for anything."

"I will avail myself of the interval to amass five or six millions, which will be serviceable as money in hand in case of war."

"Five or six millions !"

"For the expenses of your majesty's household only, be it understood."

"You think war is probable, M. Fouquet ?"

"I think that if Heaven has bestowed on the eagle a beak and claws, it is to enable him to show his royal character." The king blushed with pleasure.

"We have spent a great deal of money these few days past, Monsieur Fouquet ; will you not scold me for it ?"

"Sire, your majesty has still twenty years of youth to enjoy, and a thousand million of francs to spend in those twenty years."

"That is a great deal of money, M. Fouquet," said the king.

"I will economize, sire. Besides, your majesty has two valuable men in M. Colbert and myself. The one will encourage you to be prodigal with your treasures—and this shall be myself, if my services should continue to be agreeable to your majesty ; and the other will economize money for you, and this will be M. Colbert's province."

"M. Colbert ?" returned the king, astonished.

"Certainly, sire ; M. Colbert is an excellent accountant."

At this commendation, bestowed by the enemy on the enemy himself, the king felt himself penetrated with confidence and admiration. There was not, moreover, either in Fouquet's voice or look, anything which injuriously affected a single syllable of the remark he had made ; he did not pass one eulogium, as it were, in order to acquire the right of making two reproaches. The king comprehended him, and yielding to so much generosity and address, he said, "You praise M. Colbert, then ?"

"Yes, sire, I praise him ; for, besides being a man of merit, I believe him to be very devoted to your majesty's interests."

"Is that because he has often interfered with your own views?" said the king, smiling.—"Exactly, sire."

"Explain yourself."

"It is simple enough. I am the man who is needed to make the money come in; he, the man who is needed to prevent it leaving."

"Nay, nay, monsieur le surintendant, you will presently say something which will correct this good opinion?"

"Do you mean as far as administrative abilities are concerned, sire?"

"Yes."

"Not in the slightest."—"Really?"

Upon my honour, sire, I do not know throughout France a better clerk than M. Colbert."

This word "clerk" did not possess, in 1661, the somewhat subservient signification which is attached to it in the present day; but, as spoken by Fouquet, whom the king had addressed as the surintendant, it seemed to acquire an insignificant and petty character, which served admirably to restore Fouquet to his place, and Colbert to his own.

"And yet," said Louis XIV., "it was he, however, who, notwithstanding his economy, had the arrangement of my *fêtes* here at Fontainebleau, and I assure you, Monsieur Fouquet, that in no way has he interfered with the expenditure of money." Fouquet bowed, but did not reply.

"Is it not your opinion, too?" said the king.

"I think, sire," he replied, "that M. Colbert has done what he had to do in an exceedingly orderly manner, and that he deserves, in this respect, all the praise your majesty may bestow upon him."

The word "orderly" was a proper accompaniment for the word "clerk." The king possessed that extreme sensitiveness of organization, that delicacy of perception, which pierced through and detected the regular order of feelings and sensations, before the actual sensations themselves, and he therefore comprehended that the clerk had, in Fouquet's opinion, been too full of method and order in his arrangements; in other words, that the magnificent *fêtes* of Fontainebleau might have been rendered more magnificent still. The king consequently felt that there was something in the amusements he had provided with which some person or another might be able to find fault; he experienced a little of the annoyance felt by a person coming from the provinces to Paris, dressed out in the very best clothes which his wardrobe can furnish, and finds that the fashionably dressed man there looks at him either too much or not enough. This part of the conversation, which Fouquet had carried on with so much moderation, yet with such extreme tact, inspired the king with the highest esteem for the character of the man and the capacity of the minister. Fouquet took his leave at two o'clock in the morning, and the king went to bed a little uneasy and confused at the indirect lesson he had just received; and two good quarters of an hour were employed by him in going over again in his memory the embroideries, the tapestries, the bills of fare of the various bouquets, the architecture of the triumphal arches, the arrangements for the illuminations and fireworks, all the offspring of the "clerk Colbert's" invention. The result was, that the king passed in review before him everything that had taken place during the last eight days, and decided that faults could be found in his *fêtes*. But Fouquet, by his politeness, his thoughtful consideration, and his generosity, had injured Colbert more deeply than the latter by his artifice, his ill-will, and his persevering hatred, had ever succeeded in injuring Fouquet.

CHAPTER CXXIII.

FONTAINEBLEAU AT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.

As we have seen, Saint-Aignan had quitted the king's apartment at the very moment the surintendant entered it. Saint-Aignan was charged with a mission which required despatch, and he was going to do his utmost to turn his time to the best possible advantage. He whom we have introduced as the king's friend was indeed an uncommon personage ; he was one of those valuable courtiers whose vigilance and acuteness of perception drew all past and future favourites into the shade, and counterbalanced, by his close attention, the servility of Dangeau, who was not the favourite, but the toady of the king. M. de Saint-Aignan began to think what was to be done in the present position of affairs. He reflected that his first information ought to come from De Guiche. He therefore set out in search of him, but De Guiche, whom we saw disappear behind one of the wings of the château, and who seemed to have returned to his own apartments, had not entered the château. Saint-Aignan therefore, went in quest of him, and after having turned, and twisted, and searched in every direction, he perceived something like a human form leaning against a tree. His figure was as motionless as a statue, and seemed deeply engaged in looking at a window, although its curtains were closely drawn. As this window happened to be Madame's, Saint-Aignan concluded that the form in question must be that of De Guiche. He advanced cautiously, and found that he was not mistaken. De Guiche had, after his conversation with Madame, carried away such a weight of happiness, that all his strength of mind was hardly sufficient to enable him to support it. On his side, Saint-Aignan knew that De Guiche had had something to do with La Vallière's introduction to Madame's household, for a courtier knows everything and forgets nothing ; but he had never learned under what title or conditions De Guiche had conferred his protection upon La Vallière. But, in asking a great many questions it is singular if a man does not learn something, Saint-Aignan reckoned upon learning much or little, as it might be, if he were to question De Guiche with that extreme tact, and, at the same time, with that persistence in attaining an object of which he was capable. Saint-Aignan's plan was the following :—if the information obtained was satisfactory, he would inform the king, with effusion, that he had alighted upon a pearl, and claim the privilege of setting the pearl in question in the royal crown. If the information were unsatisfactory, which after all might be possible, he would examine how far the king cared about La Vallière, and make use of his information in such a manner as to get rid of the girl altogether, and thereby obtain all the merit of her banishment with all those ladies of the court who might have any pretensions upon the king's heart, beginning with Madame and finishing with the queen. In case the king should show himself obstinate in his fancy, then he would not produce the damaging information he had obtained, but would let La Vallière know that this damaging information was carefully preserved in a secret drawer of her confidant's memory ; in this manner he would be able to display his generosity before the poor girl's eyes, and to keep her in constant suspense between gratitude and apprehension, to such an extent as to make her a friend at court, interested, as an accomplice, in making her accomplice's fortune, while she was making her own. As far as concerned the day when the bomb-shell of the past should burst, forever there should be any occasion for its bursting, Saint-Aignan pro-

mised himself that he would by that time have taken all possible precautions, and would pretend an entire ignorance of the matter to the king; while, with regard to La Vallière, he would still, even on that day, have an opportunity of being considered the personification of generosity. It was with such ideas as these, which the fire of covetousness had caused to dawn into being in half an hour, that Saint-Aignan, the best son in the world, as La Fontaine would have said, determined to get De Guiche into conversation; in other words, to trouble him in his happiness—a happiness of which Saint-Aignan was quite ignorant. It was one o'clock in the morning when Saint-Aignan perceived De Guiche, standing motionless, leaning against the trunk of a tree, with his eyes fastened upon the lighted window. One o'clock in the morning, that is, the softest hour of night-time, that which painters crown with myrtles and budding poppies, the hour when eyes are heavy, hearts are throbbing, and heads feel dull and languid—an hour which casts upon the day which has passed away a look of regret, which addresses a loving greeting to the dawning light. For De Guiche it was the dawn of unutterable happiness; he would have bestowed a treasure upon a beggar, had he stood before him, to secure him an uninterrupted indulgence in his dreams. It was precisely at this hour that Saint-Aignan, badly advised—selfishness always counsels badly—came and struck him on the shoulder, at the very moment he was murmuring a word or rather a name.

"Ah!" he cried loudly, "I was looking for you."

"For me?" said De Guiche, starting.

"Yes; and I find you seemingly moon-struck. Is it likely, my dear comte, you have been attacked by a poetical malady, and are making verses?"

The young man forced a smile upon his lips, while a thousand conflicting sensations were muttering against Saint-Aignan in the deep recesses of his heart. "Perhaps," he said; "but by what happy chance——"

"Ah, your remark shows that you did not hear what I said."

"How so?"—"Why, I began by telling you I was looking for you."

"You were looking for me?"

"Yes; and I find you now in the very act."

"Of doing what, I should like to know?"

"Of singing the praises of Phillis."

"Well, I do not deny it," said De Guiche, laughing. "Yes, my dear comte, I was celebrating Phillis' praises."

"And you have acquired the right to do so."

"I?"—"You; no doubt of it; you, the intrepid protector of every beautiful and clever woman."

"In the name of goodness, what story have you got hold of now?"

"Acknowledged truths, I am well aware. But stay a moment; I am in love."

"You?"—"Yes."

"So much the better, my dear comte; tell me all about it." And De Guiche, afraid that Saint-Aignan might perhaps presently observe the window where the light was still burning, took the comte's arm, and endeavoured to lead him away.

"Oh," said the latter, resisting, "do not take me towards those dark woods; it is too damp there. Let us stay in the moonlight." And while he yielded to the pressure of De Guiche's arm, he remained in the flower-garden adjoining the château.

"Well," said De Guiche, resigning himself, "lead me where you like, and ask me what you please."

"It is impossible to be more agreeable than you are." And then, after a moment's silence, Saint-Aignan continued, "I wish you to tell me something about a certain person in whom you have interested yourself."

"And with whom you are in love?"

"I will neither admit nor deny it. You understand that a man does not readily place his heart where there is no hope of return, and that it is most essential he should take measures of security in advance."

"You are right," said De Guiche, with a sigh; "a heart is a precious gift."

"Mine particularly is very tender, and in that light I present it to you."

"Oh, you are well known, comte. Well?"

"It is simply a question of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente."

"Why, my dear Saint-Aignan, you are losing your senses, I should think."

"Why so?"—"I have never shown or taken any interest in Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente."

"Bah?"—"Never."

"Did you not obtain admission for Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente into Madame's household?"

"Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente—and you ought to know it better than any one else, my dear comte—is of a sufficiently good family to make her presence here desirable, and a greater reason therefore to render her admittance very easy."—"You are jesting."

"No; and upon my honour I do not know what you mean."

"And you had nothing, then, to do with her admission?"—"No."

"You do not know her?"

"I saw her for the first time the day she was presented to Madame. Therefore, as I have never taken any interest in her, as I do not know her, I am not able to give you the information you require." And De Guiche made a movement as though he were about to leave his questioner.

"Nay, nay, one moment, my dear comte," said Saint-Aignan; "you shall not escape me in this manner."

"Why, really it seems to me that it is now time to return to our apartments."

"And yet you were not going in when I—did not meet, but found you."

"Therefore, my dear comte," said De Guiche, "as long as you have anything to say to me, I place myself entirely at your service."

"And you are quite right in doing so. What matters half an hour more or less? Will you swear that you have no injurious communications to make to me about her, and that any injurious communications you might possibly have to make are not the cause of your silence?"

"Oh, I believe the poor child to be as pure as crystal."

"You overwhelm me with joy. And yet I do not wish to have towards you the appearance of a man so badly informed as I seem. It is quite certain that you supplied the princess's household with the ladies of honour; nay, a song even has been written about it."

"You know that songs are written about everything."

"Do you know it?"

"No; sing it to me, and I shall make its acquaintance."

"I cannot tell you how it begins; I only remember how it ends."

"Very well; at all events, that is something."

"Guiche is the furnisher  
Of the maids of honour."

"The idea is weak, and the rhyme poor," said De Guiche.

"What can you expect, my dear fellow? It is not Racine or Molière but La Feuillade's; and a great lord cannot rhyme like a beggarly poet."

"It is very unfortunate, though, that you only remember the termination."

"Stay, stay. I have just recollected the beginning of the second couplet"

" 'He has stock'd the birdcage;  
Montalais and——' "

"And La Vallière!" exclaimed Guiche, impatiently, and completely ignorant, besides, of St. Aignan's object.

"Yes, yes, you have it—you have hit upon the word La Vallière."

"A grand discovery, indeed."

"Montalais and La Vallière—these, then, are the two young girls in whom you interested yourself," said Saint-Aignan, laughing.

"And so Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente's name is not to be mentioned in the song?"—"No, indeed."

"And you are satisfied, then?"

"Perfectly; but I find Montalais there," said Saint-Aignan, still laughing.

"Oh, you will find her everywhere; she is a most active young lady."

"You know her?"

"Indirectly. She was the *protégée* of a man named Malicorne, who is a *protégée* of Manicamp's; Manicamp asked me to get the situation of maid of honour for Montalais in Madame's household, and a situation for Malicorne, as an officer in Monsieur's household. Well, I asked for the appointments, and you know very well that I have a weakness for that droll fellow Manicamp."

"And you obtained what you sought?"

"For Montalais, yes; for Malicorne, yes and no; for as yet he is only tolerated there; do you wish to know anything else?"

"The last word of the couplet still remains, La Vallière," said Saint-Aignan, resuming the smile which had so tormented Guiche.

"Well," said the latter, "it is true that I obtained admission for her in Madame's household."—"Ah, ah!" said Saint-Aignan.

"But," continued Guiche, assuming a great coldness of manner, "you will oblige me, comte, not to jest about that name. Mademoiselle Labaume Leblanc de la Vallière is a young lady perfectly well-conducted."

"Perfectly well-conducted, do you say?"—"Yes."

"Then you have not heard the last rumour?" exclaimed Saint-Aignan.

"No, and you will do me a service, my dear comte, in keeping this report to yourself, and to those who circulate it."

"Ah! bah! you take the matter up very seriously."

"Yes; Mademoiselle de Vallière is beloved by one of my best friends." Saint-Aignan started.

"Oh, oh!" he said.

"Yes, comte," continued Guiche; "and consequently, you, the most distinguished man in France for his polished courtesy of manner, will understand that I cannot allow my friend to be placed in a ridiculous position."

Saint-Aignan began to bite his nails, partially from vexation, and partially from disappointed curiosity. Guiche made him a very profound bow.

"You send me away?" said Saint-Aignan, who was dying to learn the name of the friend.

"I do not send you away, my dear fellow.—I am going to finish my lines to Phillis."

"And those lines——"

Are a *quatrain*. You understand, I trust, that a *quatrain* is a serious air?"—"Of course."  
And as, of these four lines, of which it is naturally composed, I have three and a half to make, I need my undivided attention."  
I quite understand. Adieu! comte. By the bye—"What?"  
Are you quick at making verses?"—"Wonderfully so."  
Will you quite have finished the three lines and a half to-morrow morning?"—"I hope so."  
Adieu, then, until to-morrow."—"Adieu, adieu!"

Saint-Aignan was obliged to accept the notice to quit; he accordingly did so, and disappeared behind the hedge. Their conversation had led Lucie and Saint-Aignan a good distance from the *château*. Every mathematician, every poet, and every dreamer, has his means of diverting his attention; Saint-Aignan, then, on leaving Guiche, found himself at the extremity of the grove,—at the very spot where the outbuildings of the servants begin, and where, behind thickets of acacias and chestnut-trees interlacing their branches, which were hidden by masses of clematis and young vines, the wall which separated the woods from the courtyard of these outbuildings, was erected. Saint-Aignan, alone, took the path which led towards these buildings; Guiche going off in the very opposite direction. The one proceeded towards the flower-garden, while the other bent his steps towards the walls. Saint-Aignan walked on between rows of the mountain-ash, lilac, and hawthorn, which formed an almost impenetrable roof above his head; his feet were buried in the soft sward and in the thick moss. He was deliberating over a means of taking his revenge, which it seemed difficult for him to carry out, and was vexed with himself for not having learnt more about La Vallière, notwithstanding the ingenious measures he had resorted to in order to acquire some information about her, when suddenly the murmur of a human voice attracted his attention. He heard whispers, the complaining tones of a woman's voice mingled with entreaties, smothered laughter, sighs, and half-stifled exclamations of surprise; but above them all, the woman's voice prevailed. Saint-Aignan stopped to look about him; he perceived with the greatest surprise that the voices proceeded, not from the ground but from the branches of the trees. As he glided along under the covered walk, he raised his head, and observed at the top of the wall a woman perched upon a ladder, in eager conversation with a man seated on a branch of a chestnut tree, whose head alone could be seen, the rest of his body being concealed in the thick covert of the chestnut. The woman was on the near side of the wall, the man on the other side of it.

## CHAPTER CXXIV.

### THE LABYRINTH.

SAINT-AIGNAN, who had only been seeking for information, had met with an adventure. This was indeed a piece of good luck. Curious to learn why, and particularly about what, this man and woman were conversing at such an hour and in such a singular position, Saint-Aignan made himself as small as he possibly could, and approached almost under the rounds of the ladder. And taking measures to make himself as comfortable as possible, he leaned his back against a tree and listened, and heard the following conversation. The woman was the first to speak.

"Really, Monsieur Manicamp," she said in a voice which, notwithstanding the reproaches she addressed to him, preserved a marked tone of coquetry, "really, your indiscreetness is of a very dangerous character. We cannot talk long in this manner without being observed."

"That is very probable," said the man in the calmest and coolest tones.

"In that case, then, what would people say? Oh! if any one were to see me, I declare I should die from very shame."

"Oh! that would be very silly, and I do not believe you capable of it."

"It might have been different if there had been anything between us, but to do an injury to myself gratuitously, is really very foolish of me; so adieu, Monsieur Manicamp."

"So far so good; I know the man, and now let me see who the woman is," said Saint-Aignan, watching the rounds of the ladder, on which were standing two pretty little feet covered with blue satin shoes.

"Nay, nay, for pity's sake, my dear Montalais," cried Manicamp, "deuce take it, do not go away; I have a great many things to say to you, of the very greatest importance, still."

"Montalais," said Saint-Aignan to himself, "one of the three. Each of the three gossips had her adventure, only I had thought that the hero of this one's adventure was Malicorne and not Manicamp."

At her companion's appeal, Montalais stopped in the middle of her descent, and Saint-Aignan could observe the unfortunate Manicamp climb from one branch of the chestnut-tree to another, either to improve his situation or to overcome the fatigue consequent upon his indifferent position.

"Now listen to me," said he; "you quite understand, I hope, that my intentions are perfectly innocent."

"Of course. But why did you write me a letter stimulating my gratitude towards you? Why did you ask me for an interview at such an hour and in such a place as this?"

"I stimulated your gratitude in reminding you that it was I who had been the means of your becoming attached to Madame's household; because most anxiously desirous of obtaining the interview which you have been kind enough to grant me, I employed the means which appeared to me the most certain to insure it. And my reason for soliciting it, at such an hour and in such a locality, was, that the hour seemed to me to be the most prudent and the locality the least open to observation. Moreover, I had occasion to speak to you upon certain subjects which require both prudence and solitude."

"Monsieur Manicamp!"

"But everything in the most perfect honour, I assure you."

"I think, Monsieur Manicamp, that it will be more becoming in me to take my leave."

"Nay, listen to me, or I shall jump from my perch here to yours, and be careful how you set me at defiance; for a branch of this chestnut-tree causes me a good deal of annoyance, and may provoke me to extreme measures. Do not follow the example of this branch, then, but listen to me."

"I am listening, and I will agree to do so; but be as brief as possible, for if you have a branch of the chestnut-tree which annoys you, I wish you to understand that one of the rounds of the ladder is hurting the soles of my feet, and my shoes are being cut through."

"Do me the kindness to give me your hand?"—"Why?"

"Will you have the goodness to do so?"  
 "There is my hand, then; but what are you going to do?"  
 "To draw you towards me."  
 "What for? You surely do not wish me to join you in the tree?"  
 "No; but I wish you to sit down upon the wall; there, that will do; there is quite room enough, and I would give a great deal to be allowed to sit down beside you."  
 "No, no; you are very well where you are; we should be seen."  
 "Do you really think so?" said Manicamp, in an insinuating voice.  
 "I am sure of it."  
 "Very well, I remain in my tree, then, although I cannot be worse off than I am."  
 "Monsieur Manicamp, we are wandering away from the subject."  
 "You're right; we are so."  
 "You wrote me a letter?"—"I did."  
 "Why did you write?"  
 "Fancy, that at two o'clock to-day, De Guiche left."  
 "What then?"  
 "Seeing him set off, I followed him, as I usually do."  
 "Of course, I see that, since you are here now."  
 "Don't be in a hurry. You are aware, I suppose, that De Guiche is up to his very neck in disgrace?"—"Alas! yes."  
 "It was the very height of imprudence on his part, then, to come to Montaigne to seek those who had at Paris sent him away into exile, and particularly those from whom he had been separated."  
 "Monsieur Manicamp, you reason like Pythagoras of old."  
 "Moreover, De Guiche is as obstinate as a man in love can be, and he refused to listen to any of my remonstrances. I begged, I implored him, but he would not listen to anything. Oh! the deuce!"  
 "What's the matter?"  
 "I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle Montalais, but this confounded branch, about which I have already had the honour of speaking to you, has just torn a certain portion of my dress."  
 "It is quite dark," replied Montalais, laughing; "so, pray continue, M. Manicamp."  
 "De Guiche set off on horseback as hard as he could, I following him, at a slower pace. You quite understand that to throw one's self into the water, for instance, with a friend with the same headlong speed as he himself would do it, would be the act either of a fool or a madman. I therefore allowed De Guiche to get in advance, and I proceeded on my way with a commendable slowness of pace, feeling quite sure that my unfortunate friend would not be received, or, if he had been, that he would ride off again at the very first cross, disagreeable answer; and that I should find him returning much faster than he had gone, without having, myself, gone farther than Ris or Melun—and that even was a good distance, you will admit, for it is eleven leagues to get there and as many to return."  
 Montalais shrugged her shoulders.  
 "Laugh as much as you like; but if, instead of being comfortably seated on the top of the wall, as you are, you were sitting on this branch, as if you were on horseback, you would, like Augustus, aspire to descend."  
 "Be patient, my dear M. Manicamp, a few minutes will soon pass away; you were saying, I think, that you had gone beyond Ris and Melun."  
 "Yes; I went through Ris and Melun, and I continued to go on, more and more surprised that I did not see him returning; and here I am at

Fontainebleau ; I look for, and inquire after De Guiche everywhere, but no one has seen him, no one in the town has spoken to him ; he arrived riding at full gallop, he entered the *château*, where he has disappeared. I have been here at Fontainebleau since eight o'clock this evening, inquiring for De Guiche in every direction, but no De Guiche can be found. I am dying from uneasiness. You understand, that I have not been running my head into the lion's den, in entering the *château*, as my imprudent friend has done ; I came at once to the servants' offices, and I succeeded in getting a letter conveyed to you ; and now, for Heaven's sake, my dear young lady, relieve me from my anxiety."

"There will be no difficulty in that, my dear M. Manicamp ; your friend De Guiche has been admirably received."—"Bah !"

"The king made quite a fuss with him."

"The king who exiled him !"

"Madame smiled upon him, and Monsieur appears to like him better than ever."

"Ah ! ah !" said Manicamp, "that explains to me, then, why and how he has remained. And did he not say anything about me ?"

"Not a word."

"That is very unkind. What is he doing now ?"

"In all probability he is asleep, or if not asleep, he is dreaming."

"And what have they been doing all the evening ?"—"Dancing."

"The famous ballet ? How did De Guiche look ?"—"Superb."

"Dear fellow ! And now, pray forgive me, Mademoiselle Montalais, but all that I now have to do is to pass from where I now am to your apartment."

"What do you mean ?"

"I cannot suppose that the door of the *château* will be opened for me at this hour ; and as for spending the night upon this branch, I possibly might not object to do so, but I declare that is impossible for any other animal than a *papegai* to do it."

"But M. Manicamp, I cannot introduce a man over the wall in that manner."

"Two, if you please," said a second voice, but in so timid a tone that it seemed as if its owner felt the utter impropriety of such a request.

"Good gracious !" exclaimed Montalais, "who is that speaking to me ?"

"Malicorne, Mademoiselle Montalais."

And, as Malicorne spoke, he raised himself from the ground to the lowest branches, and thence to the height of the wall.

"Monsieur Malicorne ! why you are both mad !"

"How do you do, Mademoiselle Montalais ?" inquired Malicorne.

"I needed but this !" said Montalais, in despair.

"Oh ! Mademoiselle Montalais," murmured Malicorne ; "do not be so severe, I beseech you."

"In fact," said Manicamp, "we are your friends, and you cannot possibly wish your friends to lose their lives ; and to leave us to pass the night where we are, is, in fact, condemning us both to death."

"Oh !" said Montalais, "Monsieur Malicorne is so robust that a night passed in the open air with the beautiful stars above him, will not do him any harm, and it will be a just punishment for the trick he has played me."

"Be it so, then ; let Malicorne arrange matters with you in the best way he can ; I pass over," said Manicamp. And bending down the famous branch against which he had directed such bitter complaints, he

ceeded, by the assistance of his hands and feet, in seating himself side by side with Montalais, who tried to push him back, while he endeavoured to maintain his position, and in which, moreover, he succeeded. Having taken possession of the ladder, he stepped on it, and then gallantly pressed his hand to his fair antagonist. While this was going on, Malicorne had installed himself in the chestnut-tree, in the very place Manicamp had just left, determining within himself to succeed him in the one which was now occupied. Manicamp and Montalais descended a few rounds of the ladder, Manicamp insisting, and Montalais laughing and objecting. Suddenly Malicorne's voice was heard in tones of entreaty:—

"I entreat you, Mademoiselle Montalais, not to leave me here. My position is very insecure, and some accident will be sure to befall me, if I attempt unaided to reach the other side of the wall; it does not matter if Manicamp tears his clothes, for he can make use of M. de Guiche's wardrobe; but I shall not be able to use even those belonging to M. Manicamp, if they will be torn."

"My opinion," said Manicamp, without taking any notice of Malicorne's representations, "is that the best thing to be done is to go and look for De Guiche without delay, for by-and-bye, perhaps, I may not be able to get to his apartments."

"That is my own opinion too," replied Montalais; "so go at once, Monsieur Manicamp."

"A thousand thanks. Adieu, Mademoiselle Montalais," said Manicamp, jumping to the ground, "your kindness cannot possibly be extended."

"Farewell, M. Manicamp; I am now going to get rid of M. Malicorne." Malicorne sighed. Manicamp went away a few paces, but returning to the foot of the ladder, he said, "By-the-bye, which is the way to M. de Guiche's apartments?"

"Nothing is easier. You go along by the hedge until you reach a place where the paths cross."—"Yes."

"You will see four paths."—"Exactly."

"One of which you will take."

"Which of them?"—"That to the right."

"To the right?"—"No, to the left."

"The deuce!"—"No, no, wait a minute——"

"You do not seem to be quite sure. Think again, I beg."

"You take the middle path."—"But there are four."

"So there are. All that I know is, that one of the four paths leads straight to Madame's apartments; and that one I am well acquainted with."

"But M. de Guiche is not in Madame's apartments, I suppose?"

"No, indeed."

"Well, then the path which leads to Madame's apartments is of no use to me, and I would willingly exchange it for the one that leads to where M. de Guiche is lodging."

"Of course, and I know that as well; but as for indicating from where we are, it is quite impossible."

"Well, let us suppose that I have succeeded in finding that fortunate path."

"In that case you are almost there, for you have nothing else to do but to cross the labyrinth."

"Nothing more than that? The deuce! so there is a labyrinth as well?"

"Yes, and complicated enough too ; even in daylight, one may sometimes be deceived,—there are turnings and windings without end ; in the first place, you must turn three times to the right, then twice to the left, then turn once—stay, is it once or twice, though ? at all events, when you get clear of the labyrinth, you will see an avenue of sycamores, and this avenue leads straight to the pavilion in which M. de Guiche is lodging."

"Nothing could be more clearly indicated," said Manicamp ; "and I have not the slightest doubt in the world that if I were to follow your directions, I should lose my way immediately. I have therefore a slight service to ask of you."

"What may that be ?"

"That you will offer me your arm and guide me yourself, like another—like another—I used to know mythology, but other important matters have made me forget it ; pray come with me, then ?"

"And am I to be abandoned, then ?" cried Malicorne.

"It is quite impossible, monsieur," said Montalais to Manicamp ; "if I were to be seen with you at such an hour, what would be said of me ?"

"Your own conscience would acquit you," said Manicamp, sententiously.

"Impossible, monsieur, impossible."

"In that case, let me assist Malicorne to get down ; he is a very intelligent fellow, and possesses a very keen scent ; he will guide me, and we lose ourselves, both of us will be lost, and the one will save the other. If we are together, and should be met by any one, we shall look as if we had some matter of business in hand ; whilst alone I should have the appearance either of a lover or a robber. Come, Malicorne, here is the ladder."

Malicorne had already stretched out one of his legs towards the top of the wall, when Manicamp said, in a whisper, "Hush !"

"What's the matter ?" inquired Montalais.

"I hear footsteps."—"Good heavens !"

In fact, the fancied footsteps soon became a reality ; the foliage was pushed aside, and Saint-Aignan appeared, with a smile on his lips, and his hand stretched out towards them, taking every one by surprise ; that is to say, Malicorne upon the tree with his head stretched out, Montalais upon the rounds of the ladder and clinging to it tightly, and Manicamp on the ground with his foot advanced ready to set off. "Good evening, Manicamp," said the comte, "I am glad to see you, my dear fellow ; we missed you this evening, and a good many inquiries have been made about you. Mademoiselle de Montalais, your most obedient servant."

Montalais blushed. "Good heavens !" she exclaimed, hiding her face in both her hands.

"Pray reassure yourself ; I know how perfectly innocent you are, and I shall give a good account of you. Manicamp, do you follow me ; the hedge, the cross-paths, and labyrinth, I am well acquainted with them all ; I will be your Ariadne. There now, your mythological name is found at last."—"Perfectly true, comte."

"And take M. Malicorne away with you at the same time," said Montalais.

"No, indeed," said Malicorne ; "M. Manicamp has conversed with you as long as he liked, and now it is my turn, if you please ; I have a multitude of things to tell you about our future prospects."

"You hear," said the comte, laughing ; "stay with him, Mademoiselle

Montalais. This is, indeed, a night for secrets." And, taking Manicamp's arm, the comte led him rapidly away in the direction of the road which Montalais knew so well, and indicated so badly. Montalais followed them with her eyes as long as she could perceive them.

## CHAPTER CXXV.

HOW MALICORNE HAD BEEN TURNED OUT OF THE HOTEL OF THE  
"BEAU PAON."

WHILE Montalais was engaged in looking after the comte and Manicamp, Malicorne had taken advantage of the young girl's attention being drawn away to render his position somewhat more tolerable, and when she turned round, she immediately noticed the change which had taken place; for he had seated himself, like a monkey, upon the wall, with his feet resting upon the top rounds of the ladder. The foliage of the wild vine and the honeysuckle curled round his head like a Faun, while the twisted ivy branches represented tolerably enough his cloven feet. Montalais required nothing to make her resemblance to a Dryad as complete as possible. "Well," she said, ascending another round of the ladder; "are you resolved to render me unhappy? Have you not persecuted me enough, tyrant, that you are?"

"I a tyrant!" said Malicorne.

"Yes, you are always compromising me, Monsieur Malicorne; you are perfect monster of wickedness."—"I?"

"What have you to do with Fontainebleau? Is not Orleans your place of residence?"

"Do you ask me what I have to do here? I wanted to see you."

"Ah, great need of that."

"Not as far as concerns yourself, perhaps, but as far as I am concerned. Mademoiselle Montalais, you know very well that I have left my home, and that, for the future, I have no other place of residence than that which you may happen to have. As you, therefore, are staying at Fontainebleau at the present moment, I have come to Fontainebleau."

Montalais shrugged her shoulders. "You wished to see me, did you not?" she said.—"Of course."

"Very well, you have seen me,—you are satisfied; so now go away."

"Oh, no," said Malicorne; "I came to talk with you as well as to see you."

"Very well, we will talk by-and-by, and in another place than this."

"By-and-by! heaven only knows if I shall meet you by-and-by in another place. We shall never find a more favourable one than this."

"But I cannot this evening, nor at the present moment."

"Why not?"

"Because a thousand things have happened to-night."

"Well, then, my affair will make a thousand and one."

"No, no; Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente is waiting for me in our room to communicate something of the very greatest importance."

"How long has she been waiting?"—"For an hour at least."

"In that case," said Malicorne, tranquilly, "she will wait a few minutes longer."

"Monsieur Malicorne," said Montalais, "you are forgetting yourself."

"You should rather say that it is you who are forgetting me, and that I am getting impatient at the part you make me play here, indeed! For the

last week I have been prowling about among the company here, and you have not deigned once to notice my presence here."

"Have you been prowling about here for a week, M. Malicorne?"

"Like a wolf; sometimes I have been burnt by the fireworks, which have singed two of my wigs; at others, I have been completely drenched in the osiers by the evening damps, or the spray from the fountains, always half-famished, always fatigued to death, with the view of a wall always before me, and the prospect of having to scale it perhaps. Upon my word, this is not the sort of life for any one to lead who is neither a squirrel, nor a salamander, nor an otter; and, since you drive your humanity so far as to wish to make me renounce my condition as a man, I declare it openly. A man I am indeed, and a man I will remain, unless by superior orders."

"Well, then, tell me, what do you wish,—what do you require,—what do you insist upon?" said Montalais, in a submissive tone.

"Do you mean to tell me that you did not know I was at Fontainebleau?"—"I?"

"Nay, be frank."—"I suspected so."

"Well, then, could you not have contrived during the last week to have seen me once a day, at least?"

"I have always been prevented, M. Malicorne."—"Fiddlestick!"

"Ask my companion, if you do not believe me."

"I shall ask no one to explain matters which I know better than any one."

"Compose yourself, M. Malicorne; things will change."

"They must indeed."

"You know that, whether I see you or not, I am thinking of you," said Montalais, in a coaxing tone of voice.

"Oh, you are thinking of me, are you! well, and is there anything new?"—"What about?"

"About my post in Monsieur's household."

"Ah, my dear Monsieur Malicorne, no one has ventured lately to approach his royal highness."—"Well, but now?"

"Now, it is quite a different thing; since yesterday he has left off being jealous."—"Bah! how has his jealousy subsided?"

"It has been diverted into another channel."—"Tell me all about it."

"A report was spread that the king had fallen in love with some one else, and Monsieur was tranquillised immediately."

"And who spread the report?"

Montalais lowered her voice. "Between ourselves," she said, "I think that Madame and the king have come to an understanding about it."

"Ah, ah!" said Malicorne; "that was the only way to manage it. But what about poor M. de Guiche?"

"Oh, as for him, he is completely turned off."

"Have they been writing to each other?"

"No, certainly not; I have not seen a pen in either of their hands for the last week."

"On what terms are you with Madame?"—"The very best."

"And with the king?"

"The king always smiles at me whenever I pass him."

"Good. Now tell me whom have the two lovers selected to serve for their screen?"—"La Vallière."

"Oh, oh, poor girl! We must prevent that."—"Why?"

"Because, if M. Raoul de Bragelonne were to suspect it, he would either kill her or kill himself."

Raoul, poor fellow ! do you think so ?”

Women pretend to have a knowledge of the state of people's affections,” said Malicorne, “and they do not even know how to read the signs of their own minds and hearts. Well, I can tell you, that M. de Bragelonne loves La Vallière to such a degree that, if she pretended to give him, he would, I repeat, either kill himself or kill her.”

But the king is there to defend her,” said Montalais.

The king !” exclaimed Malicorne ; “Raoul would kill the king as he would a common thief.”

Good heavens !” said Montalais ; “you are mad, M. Malicorne.”

Not in the least. Everything I have told you is, on the contrary, perfectly serious ; and, for my own part, I know one thing.”

What is that ?”

That I shall quietly tell Raoul of the trick.”

Hush !” said Montalais, ascending another round of the ladder, so as to approach Malicorne more closely, “do not open your lips to poor Raoul.”

Why not ?”——“Because, as yet you know nothing at all.”

What is the matter then ?”

Why, this evening—but no one is listening, I hope ?”——“No.”

This evening, then, beneath the royal oak, La Vallière said aloud, and innocently enough, ‘I cannot conceive that when one has once seen the king, one can ever love another man.’”

Malicorne almost jumped off the wall. “Unhappy girl ! did she really say that ?”——“Word for word.”

And she thinks so ?”

La Vallière always thinks what she says.”

That positively cries aloud for vengeance. Why, women are the fiercest serpents,” said Malicorne.

Compose yourself, my dear Malicorne, compose yourself.”

“No, no ; let us take the evil in time, on the contrary. There is time enough yet to tell Raoul of it.”

“Blunderer, on the contrary, it is too late,” replied Montalais.

How so ?”

La Vallière's remark, which was intended for the king, reached its destination.”

“The king knows it then ? The king was told of it, I suppose ?”

“The king heard it.”

“*Ohimé !* as the cardinal used to say.”

“The king was hidden in the thicket close to the royal oak.”

“It follows, then,” said Malicorne, “that, for the future, the plan which the king and Madame have arranged, will go as easily as if it were on wheels, and will pass over poor Bragelonne's body.”

“Precisely so.”

“Well,” said Malicorne, after a moment's reflection, “do not let us interfere our poor selves between a large oak tree and a great king, for we should certainly be ground to pieces.”

“The very thing I was going to say to you.”

“Let us think of ourselves, then.”——“My own idea.”

“Open your beautiful eyes, then.”

“And you your large ears.”

“Approach your little mouth for a kiss.”

“Here,” said Montalais, who paid the debt immediately in ringing coin.

“Now, let us consider. First, we have M. de Guiche, who is in love

with Madame ; then La Vallière, who is in love with the king ; next, the king, who is in love both with Madame and La Vallière ; lastly, Monsieur, who loves no one but himself. Among all these loves, a noodle would make his fortune ; a greater reason, therefore, for sensible people like ourselves to do so."

"There you are with your dreams again."

"Nay, rather with realities. Let me lead you, darling. I do not think you have been very badly off hitherto."—"No."

"Well, the future is guaranteed by the past. Only since all here think of themselves before anything else, let us do so too."

"Perfectly right."

"But of ourselves only."—"Be it so."

"An offensive and defensive alliance."—"I am ready to swear it."

"Put out your hand, then, and say, 'All for Malicorne.'"

"All for Malicorne."

"And I, 'All for Montalais,'" replied Malicorne, stretching out his hand in his turn.

"And now, what is to be done?"

"Keep your eyes and ears constantly open ; collect every means of attack which may be serviceable against others ; never let anything slip about which can be used against ourselves."

"Agreed."—"Decided."

"Sworn to ; and, now the agreement is entered into, good-bye."

"What do you mean by 'good-bye'?"

"Of course, you can now return to your inn."

"To my inn?"

"Yes ; are you not lodging at the sign of the 'Beau Paon'?"

"Montalais, Montalais, you now see that you were aware of my being at Fontainebleau."

"Well, and what does that prove except that I occupied myself about you more than you deserve?"

"Hum !"—"Go back, then, to the 'Beau Paon.'"

"That is now quite out of the question."

"Have you not a room there?"—"I had, but have it no longer."

"Who has taken it from you, then?"

"I will tell you. Some little time ago I was returning there, after I had been running about after you ; and, having reached my hotel quite out of breath, I perceived a litter, upon which four peasants were carrying a sick monk."

"A monk?"

"Yes, an old grey-bearded Franciscan. As I was looking at the monk, they entered the hotel ; and as they were carrying him up the staircase, I followed ; and as I reached the top of the staircase, I observed that they took him into my room."

"Into your room?"

"Yes, into my own apartment. Supposing it to be a mistake, I summoned the landlord, who says that the room which had been let to me for the past eight days, was let to the Franciscan for the ninth."

"Oh, oh !"

"That was exactly what I said ; nay, I did even more, for I was inclined to get out of temper. I went upstairs again ; I spoke to the Franciscan himself, and wished to prove to him the impropriety of the step, when this monk, dying though he seemed to be, raised himself upon his arm, fixed a pair of blazing eyes upon me, and, in a voice which was admirably suited

commanding a charge of cavalry, said, 'Turn this fellow out of doors !' which was done immediately by the landlord and the four porters, who made me descend the staircase somewhat faster than was agreeable. This is how it happens, dearest, that I have no lodging."

"Who can this Franciscan be?" said Montalais. "Is he a general?" "That is exactly the very title that one of the bearers of the litter gave me as he spoke to him in a low tone."

"So that——" said Montalais.

"So that I have no room, no hotel, no lodging ; and that I am as determined as my friend Manicamp was just now, not to pass the night in the open air."

"What is to be done, then?" said Montalais.

"Nothing easier," said a third voice, whereupon Montalais and Malicorne uttered a simultaneous cry, and Saint-Aignan appeared. "Dear Monsieur Malicorne," said Saint-Aignan, "a very lucky accident has brought me back to extricate you from your embarrassment. Come, I will offer you a room in my own apartments, which, I can assure you, no Franciscan will deprive you of. As for you, my dear young lady, be easy. I already knew Mademoiselle de la Vallière's secret, and that of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente ; your own you have just been kind enough to confide to me, for which I thank you. I can keep three quite as well as one only." Malicorne and Montalais looked at each other, like two children detected in a theft ; but as Malicorne saw a great advantage in the position which had been made to him, he gave Montalais a sign of assent, which she returned. Malicorne then descended the ladder, and by round, reflecting at every step upon the means of obtaining succour from M. de Saint-Aignan all he might possibly know about the famous secret. Montalais had already darted away as fleet as a deer, and neither cross-road nor labyrinth was able to deceive her. As for Saint-Aignan, he carried off Malicorne with him to his apartments, showing him a thousand attentions, enchanted to have close at hand the very two men who, supposing that De Guiche were to remain silent, could give him the best information about the maids of honour.

## CHAPTER CXXVI.

WHAT ACTUALLY DID OCCUR AT THE INN CALLED THE "BEAU PAON." IN the first place, let us supply our readers with a few details about the inn called the "Beau Paon." It owed its name to its sign, which represented a peacock spreading out its tail. But, in imitation of some painters who had bestowed the face of a handsome young man upon the serpent which tempted Eve, the painter of this sign had conferred upon the peacock the features of a woman. This inn, a living epigram against that half of the human race which renders existence delightful, was situated at Fontainebleau, in the first turning on the left hand side, which divides on the road from Paris, that large artery which constitutes in itself alone the entire town of Fontainebleau. The side-street in question was then known as the Rue de Lyon, doubtless because, geographically, it advanced in the direction of the second capital of the kingdom. The street itself was composed of two houses occupied by persons of the class of tradespeople, the houses being separated by two large gardens bordered with hedges running round them. Apparently, however, there seemed to be three houses in the street. Let us explain, notwithstanding appearances,

how there were only two. The inn of the "Beau Paon" had its principal front towards the main street ; but upon the Rue de Lyon there were two ranges of buildings divided by courtyards, which comprised sets of apartments for the reception of all classes of travellers, whether on foot or on horseback, or even with their own carriages ; and in which could be supplied, not only board and lodging, but also accommodation for exercise, and opportunities of solitude for even the wealthiest courtiers, whenever, after having received some check at the court, they wished to shut themselves up with their own society, either to devour an affront, or to brood over their revenge. From the windows of this part of the building the traveller could perceive, in the first place, the street with the grass growing between the stones, which were being gradually loosened by it ; next, the beautiful hedges of elder and thorn, which embraced, as though within two green and flowering arms, the houses of which we have spoken ; and then, in the spaces between those houses, forming the groundwork of the picture, and appearing like an almost impassable barrier, a line of thick trees, the advanced sentinels of the vast forest which extends itself in front of Fontainebleau. It was therefore easy, provided one secured an apartment at the angle of the building, to obtain, by the main street from Paris, a view of, as well as to hear, the passers-by and the *fêtes* ; and, by the Rue de Lyon, to look upon and to enjoy the calm of the country. And this without reckoning that, in cases of urgent necessity, at the very moment people might be knocking at the principal door in the Rue de Paris, one could make one's escape by the little door in the Rue de Lyon, and, creeping along the gardens of the private houses, attain the outskirts of the forest. Malicorne, who, it will be remembered, was the first to speak about this inn, by way of deploring his being turned out of it, having been absorbed in his own affairs, had not told Montalais all that could be said about this curious inn ; and we will try to repair Malicorne's grievous omission. With the exception of the few words he had said about the Franciscan friar, he had not given any particulars about the travellers who were staying in the inn. The manner in which they had arrived, the manner in which they lived, the difficulty which existed for every one but certain privileged travellers, in entering the hotel without a pass-word, and to live there without certain preparatory precautions, must have struck Malicorne ; and, we will venture to say, really did so. But Malicorne, as we have already said, had some personal matters of his own to occupy his attention, which prevented him from paying much attention to others. In fact, all the apartments of the hotel were engaged and retained by certain strangers, who never stirred out, who were incommunicative in their address, with countenances full of thoughtful occupation, and not one of whom was known to Malicorne. Every one of these travellers had arrived at the hotel after his own arrival there ; each man had entered after having given a kind of pass-word, which had at first attracted Malicorne's attention ; but having inquired, in an indirect manner, about it, he had been informed that the host had given as a reason for this extreme vigilance, that, as the town was so full of wealthy noblemen, it must also be as full of clever and zealous pickpockets. The reputation of an honest inn like that of the "Beau Paon" was concerned in not allowing its visitors to be robbed. It occasionally happened that Malicorne asked himself, as he thought matters carefully over in his mind, and reflected upon his own position in the inn, how it was that they had allowed him to become an inmate of the hotel, whilst he had observed, since his residence there, admission refused to so many. He asked himself, too, how it was that Manicamp, who, in his

nion, must be a man to be looked upon with veneration by everybody, who wished to bait his horse at the "Beau Paon," on arriving there, his horse and rider had been incontinently led away with a *nescio vos* the most positive character. All this for Malicorne, whose mind being wholly occupied by his own love affair and his personal ambition, was a problem he had not applied himself to solve. Had he wished to do so, we could hardly venture, notwithstanding the intelligence we have accorded him his due, to say he would have succeeded. A few words will prove to the reader that nothing less than Œdipus in person could have solved the riddle in question. During the week, seven travellers had taken up their abode in the inn, all of them having arrived there the day after the fortunate day on which Malicorne had fixed his choice on the "Beau Paon." These seven persons, accompanied by a suitable retinue, were the following:—First of all, a brigadier in the German army, his secretary, physician, three servants, and seven horses. The brigadier's name was the comte de Wostpur.—A Spanish cardinal, with two nephews, two secretaries, an officer of his household, and twelve horses. The cardinal's name was Monseigneur Herrabia.—A rich merchant of Bremen, with his man-servant and two horses. This merchant's name was Meinheer Bonnett.—A Venetian senator, with his wife and daughter, both extremely beautiful. The senator's name was Signor Marini.—A Scotch laird, with seven Highlanders of his clan, all on foot. The laird's name was Mac Annor.—An Austrian from Vienna, without title or coat-of-arms, who had arrived in a carriage; a good deal of the priest, and something of the soldier. He was called the Councillor.—And, finally, a Flemish lady, with a man servant, a lady's-maid, and a female companion, a large retinue of servants, great display, and immense horses. She was called the Flemish lady.

All these travellers had arrived on the same day, and yet their arrival had occasioned no confusion in the inn, no stoppage in the street; their apartments had been fixed upon beforehand, by their couriers or their secretaries, who had arrived the previous evening or the same morning. Malicorne, who had arrived the previous day, and riding an ill-conditioned horse, with a slender valise, had announced himself at the hotel of the "Beau Paon" as the friend of a nobleman desirous of witnessing the *fêtes*, and who would himself arrive almost immediately. The landlord, on hearing these words, had smiled as if he were perfectly well acquainted either with Malicorne or his friend the nobleman, and had said to him, "Since you are the first arrival, monsieur, choose what apartment you please." And this was said with that obsequiousness of manners, so full of meaning with landlords, which means, "Make yourself perfectly easy, monsieur; we know with whom we have to do, and you will be treated accordingly." These words, and their accompanying gesture, Malicorne had thought very friendly, but rather obscure. However, as he did not wish to be very extravagant in his expenses, and as he thought that if he were to ask for a small apartment he would doubtless have been refused, on account of his want of consequence, he hastened to close at once with the innkeeper's remark, and deceive him with a cunning equal to his own. So, smiling as a man would do for whom whatever might be done was but simply his due, he said, "My dear host, I shall take the best and the gayest room in the house."

"With a stable?"—"Yes, with a stable."

"And when will you take it?"—"Immediately, if it be possible."

"Quite so."

"But," said Malicorne, "I shall leave the large room unoccupied for the present."

"Very good!" said the landlord, with an air of intelligence.

"Certain reasons, which you will understand by-and-by, oblige me to take, at my own cost, this small room only."

"Yes, yes," said the host.

"When my friend arrives, he will occupy the large apartment; and, as a matter of course, as this large apartment will be his own affair, he will settle for it himself."

"Certainly," said the landlord, "certainly; let it be understood in that manner."

"It is agreed, then, that such shall be the terms?"

"Word for word."

"It is extraordinary," said Malicorne to himself. "You quite understand, then?"—"Yes."

"There is nothing more to be said. Since, then, you understand—for you do clearly understand, do you not?"—"Perfectly."

"Very well; and now show me to my room."

The landlord, cap in hand, preceded Malicorne, who installed himself in his room, and became more and more surprised to observe that the landlord, at every ascent or descent, looked and winked at him in a manner which indicated the best possible intelligence between them. "There is some mistake here," said Malicorne to himself; "but until it is cleared up, I shall take the advantage of it, which is the best thing I can possibly do." And he darted out of his room like a hunting-dog following up a scent, in search of all the news and curiosities of the court, getting himself burnt in one place, and drowned in another, as he had told Mademoiselle de Montalais. The day after he had been installed in his room, he had noticed the seven travellers arrive successively, who speedily filled the whole hotel. When he saw that all this number of people, of carriages, and retinue, Malicorne rubbed his hands delightedly, thinking that, one day later, he should not have found a bed to lie upon after his return from his exploring expeditions. When all the travellers were lodged, the landlord entered Malicorne's room, and with his accustomed courteousness, said to him, "You are aware, my dear monsieur, that the large room in the third detached building is still reserved for you?"

"Of course I am aware of it."

"I am really making you a present of it."—"Thank you."

"So that when your friend comes—"—"Well!"

"He will be satisfied with me, I hope; or, if he be not, he will be very difficult to please."

"Excuse me, but will you allow me to say a few words about my friend?"

"Of course, for you have a perfect right to do so."

"He intended to come, as you know."—"And he does so still."

"He may possibly have changed his opinion."—"No."

"You are quite sure, then?"—"Quite sure."

"But in case you should have some doubt."—"Well!"

"I can only say that I do not positively assure you that he will come."

"Yet he told you—"

"He certainly did tell me; but you know that man proposes and God disposes,—*verba volant, scripta manent*."

"Which is as much as to say—"

"That what is spoken flies away, and what is written remains; and, as

did not write to me, but contented himself by saying to me, 'I will authorise you, yet without specially inviting you, you must feel that it places me in a very embarrassing position.'

"What do you authorise me to do, then?"

"Why, to let your rooms if you find a good tenant for them."

"I?"—"Yes, you."

"Never will I do such a thing, monsieur. If he has not written to you, he has written to me."

"Ah! ah! what does he say? Let us see if his letter agrees with his words."

"These are almost his very words. 'To the landlord of the "Beau Lion" Hotel,—You will have been informed of the meeting arranged to take place in your inn between some people of importance; I shall be one of those who will meet the others at Fontainebleau. Keep for me, then, a small room for a friend who will arrive either before or after me—, and you are the friend I suppose," said the landlord, interrupting his reading of the letter. Malicorne bowed modestly. The landlord continued:—"And a large apartment for myself. The large apartment is my own affair, but I wish the price of the smaller room to be moderate, as it is destined for a fellow who is deucedly poor.' It is still you he is speaking of, is he not?" said the host.

"Oh, certainly," said Malicorne.

"Then we are agreed; your friend will settle for his apartment, and you for your own."

"May I be broken alive upon the wheel," said Malicorne to himself, "if I understand anything at all about it," and then he said aloud, "Well, then, are you satisfied with the name?"—"With what name?"

"With the name at the end of the letter. Does it give you the guarantee you require?"—"I was going to ask you his name."

"What! was not the letter signed?"

"No," said the landlord, opening his eyes very wide, full of mystery and curiosity.

"In that case," replied Malicorne, imitating his gesture and his mysterious look, "if he has not given you his name, you understand, he must have his reasons for it."—"Oh, of course."

"And therefore, that I, his friend, his confidant, must not betray him."

"You are perfectly right, monsieur," said the landlord, "and therefore I do not insist upon it."

"I appreciate your delicacy. As for myself, as my friend told you, my room is a separate affair, so let us come to terms about it. Short accounts make good friends. How much is it?"

"There is no hurry."

"Never mind, let us reckon it up all the same. Room, my own board, a place in the stable for my horse, and his feed. How much per day?"

"Four livres, monsieur."

"Which will make twelve livres for the three days I have been here?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Here are your twelve livres, then."

"But why settle now?"

"Because," said Malicorne, lowering his voice, and resorting to his former air of mystery, because he saw that the mysterious had succeeded, "because if I had to set off suddenly, to decamp at any moment, my account would be already settled."

"You are right, monsieur."

"I may consider myself at home, then?"—"Perfectly."

"So far so well. Adieu!" And the landlord withdrew. Malicorne left alone, reasoned with himself in the following manner:—"No one but De Guiche or Manicamp could have written to this fellow; De Guiche because he wishes to secure a lodging for himself beyond the precincts of the court, in the event of his success or failure, as the case might be; Manicamp, because De Guiche must have entrusted him with his commission. And De Guiche or Manicamp will have argued in this manner: The large apartment in which one could receive, in a befitting manner, a lady very thickly veiled, reserving to the lady in question a double means of exit, either in a street somewhat deserted, or closely adjoining the forest. The smaller room, either to shelter Manicamp for a time, who is De Guiche's confidant, and would be the vigilant keeper of the door, or for De Guiche himself, acting, for greater safety, the part of master and of confidant at the same time. Yet," he continued, "how about this meeting which is to take place, and which indeed has actually taken place, in this hotel! No doubt they are persons who are going to be presented to the king. And the 'poor devil,' for whom the smaller room is destined, is a trick, in order the better to conceal De Guiche or Manicamp. If this be the case, as very likely it is, there is only half the mischief done, for there is simply the length of one's purse-strings between Manicamp and Malicorne." After he had thus reasoned the matter out, Malicorne had slept soundly, leaving the seven travellers to occupy, and in every sense of the word to walk up and down, their several lodgings in the hotel. Whenever there was nothing at court to put him out, when he had wearied himself with his excursions and investigations, tired of writing letters which he could never find an opportunity of delivering to whom they were intended, he then returned home to his comfortable little room, and leaning upon the balcony, which was filled with nasturtiums and white pinks, he began to think over these strange travellers, for whom Fontainebleau seemed to possess no attractions in its illuminations, or amusements, or *fêtes*. Things went on in this manner until the seventh day, a day of which we have given such full details, with its night also, in the preceding chapters. On that night Malicorne was enjoying the fresh air, seated at his window, towards one o'clock in the morning, when Manicamp appeared on horseback, with a thoughtful and listless air.

"Good!" said Malicorne to himself, recognising him at the first glance: "there's my friend, who is come to take possession of his apartment, that is to say, of my room." And he called to Manicamp, who looked up and immediately recognised Malicorne.

"Ah! by Jove!" said the former, his countenance clearing up, "glad to see you, Malicorne. I have been wandering about Fontainebleau, looking for three things I cannot find: De Guiche, a room, and a stable."

"Of M. de Guiche I cannot give you either good or bad news, for I have not seen him; but as far as concerns your room and a stable, that's another matter, for they have been retained here for you."

"Retained—and by whom?"—"By yourself, I suppose."

"By me?"

"Do you mean to say you have not taken lodgings here?"

"By no means," said Manicamp.

At this moment the landlord appeared on the threshold of the door.

"I require a room," said Malicorne.

"Have you engaged one, monsieur?"—"No."

"Then I have no rooms to let."

"In that case I have engaged a room," said Manicamp.

"A room simply, or lodgings?"—"Anything you please."

"By letter?" inquired the landlord. Malicorne nodded affirmatively to Manicamp.

"Of course by letter," said Manicamp. "Did you not receive a letter from me?"

"What was the date of the letter?" inquired the host, in whom Manicamp's hesitation had aroused suspicion. Manicamp rubbed his ear, and looked up at Malicorne's window; but Malicorne had left his window and was coming down the stairs to his friend's assistance. At the very same moment, a traveller, wrapped up in a large Spanish cloak, appeared at the porch, near enough to hear the conversation.

"I ask you what was the date of the letter you wrote to me to retain apartments here?" repeated the landlord, again pressing his question.

"Last Wednesday, was the date," said the mysterious stranger, in a soft and polished tone of voice, touching the landlord on the shoulder.

Manicamp drew back, and it was now Malicorne's turn, who appeared on the threshold, to scratch his ear. The landlord saluted the new arrival as a man who recognises his true guest. "Monsieur," he said to him, with civility, "your apartment is ready for you, and the stables too, only—" He looked round him, and inquired, "Your horses?"

"My horses may or may not arrive. That, however, matters but little to you, provided you are paid for what has been engaged." The landlord bowed still lower.

"You have," continued the unknown traveller, "kept for me, besides, the small room I asked for."

"Oh!" said Malicorne, endeavouring to hide himself.

"Your friend has occupied it during the last week," said the landlord, pointing to Malicorne, who was trying to make himself as small as possible. The traveller, drawing his cloak round him so as to cover the lower part of his face, cast a rapid glance at Malicorne, and said, "This gentleman is no friend of mine."

The landlord almost started off his feet.

"I am not acquainted with this gentleman," continued the traveller.

"What!" exclaimed the host, turning to Malicorne, "are you not this gentleman's friend, then?"

"What does it matter whether I am or not, provided you are paid?" said Malicorne, parodying the stranger's remark in a very majestic manner.

"It matters so far as this," said the landlord, who began to perceive that one person had been taken for another, "that I beg you, monsieur, to leave the rooms, which had been engaged beforehand, and by some one else instead of you."

"Still," said Malicorne, "this gentleman cannot require at the same time a room on the first floor and an apartment on the second. If this gentleman will take the room, I will take the apartment; if he prefers the apartment, I will be satisfied with the room."

"I am exceedingly distressed, monsieur," said the traveller, in his soft voice, "but I need both the room and the apartment."

"At least, tell me for whom?" inquired Malicorne.

"The apartment I require for myself."

"Very well; but the room?"

"Look," said the traveller, pointing towards a sort of procession which was approaching.

Malicorne looked in the direction indicated, and observed, borne upon a litter, the arrival of the Franciscan, whose installation in his apartment he had, with a few details of his own, related to Montalais, and whom he had so uselessly endeavoured to convert to humbler views. The result of the arrival of the stranger, and of the sick Franciscan, was Malicorne's expulsion, without any consideration for his feelings, from the inn, by the landlord and the peasants who had carried the Franciscan. The details have already been given of what followed this expulsion ; of Manicamp's conversation with Montalais ; how Manicamp, with greater cleverness than Malicorne had shown, had succeeded in obtaining news of De Guiche ; of the subsequent conversation of Montalais with Malicorne ; and, finally, of the billets with which the Comte de Saint-Aignan had furnished Manicamp and Malicorne. It remains for us to inform our readers who were the traveller with the cloak—the principal tenant of the double apartment of which Malicorne had only occupied a portion,—and the Franciscan, quite as mysterious a personage, whose arrival, together with that of the stranger with the cloak, had been unfortunate enough to upset the two friends' plans.

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## CHAPTER CXXVII.

### A JESUIT OF THE ELEVENTH YEAR.

IN the first place, in order not to weary the reader's patience, we will hasten to answer the first question. The traveller with the cloak held over his face was Aramis, who, after he had left Fouquet, and had taken from a portmanteau, which his servant had opened, a cavalier's complete costume, had quitted the château, and had gone to the hotel of the " Beau Paon," where by letters, seven or eight days previously, he had, as the landlord had stated, directed a room and an apartment to be retained for him. Immediately Malicorne and Manicamp had been turned out, Aramis approached the Franciscan, and asked him whether he would prefer the apartment or the room. The Franciscan inquired where they were both situated. He was told that the room was on the first, and the apartment on the second floor.

"The room, then," he said.

Aramis did not contradict him, but, with great submissiveness, said to the landlord, "The room ;" and, bowing with respect, he withdrew into the apartment, and the Franciscan was accordingly carried at once into the room. Now, is it not extraordinary that this respect should be shown by a prelate of the church for a simple monk—for one, too, belonging to a mendicant order—to whom was given up, without a request for it even, a room which so many travellers were desirous of obtaining ? How, too, explain the unexpected arrival of Aramis at the hotel—he who had entered the château with M. Fouquet, and could have remained at the château with M. Fouquet if he had liked ? The Franciscan supported his removal up the staircase without uttering a complaint, although it was evident he suffered very much, and that every time the litter was knocked against the wall, or against the railing of the staircase, he experienced a terrible shock throughout his frame ; and finally, when he had arrived in the room, he said to those who carried him, "Help me to place myself on that arm-chair." The bearers of the litter placed it on the ground, and, lifting the sick man up as gently as possible, they carried him to the chair he had indicated, and which was situated at the head of the bed. "Now," he

ded, with a marked benignity of gesture and tone, "desire the landlord come."

They obeyed, and five minutes afterwards the landlord appeared at the door.

"Be kind enough," said the Franciscan to him, "to send these excellent fellows away; they are vassals of the Comte de Melun. They found me when I had fainted on the road overcome by the heat, and, without thinking whether they would be paid for their trouble, they wished to carry me to their own homes. But I know at what cost to themselves is the hospitality which the poor extend to a sick man, and I preferred this hotel, where, moreover, I was expected."

The landlord looked at the Franciscan in amazement, but the latter, with his thumb, made the sign of the Cross in a peculiar manner upon his forehead. The host replied by making a similar sign on his left shoulder. "Yes, indeed," he said, "we did expect you, but we hoped that you would arrive in a better state of health." And as the peasants were looking at the innkeeper, usually so supercilious, and saw how respectful he had become in the presence of a poor monk, the Franciscan drew from a deep pocket three or four pieces of gold, which he held out.

"My friends," said he, "here is something to repay you for the care you have taken of me. So make yourselves perfectly easy, and do not be afraid of leaving me here. The order to which I belong, and for which I am travelling, does not require me to beg; only, as the attention you have shown me deserves to be rewarded, take these two louis and depart in peace."

The peasants did not dare to take them. The landlord took the two louis of the monk's hand, and placed them in that of one of the peasants, the whole four of whom withdrew, opening their eyes wider than ever. The door was then closed, and, while the innkeeper stood respectfully near the Franciscan collected himself for a moment. He then passed across his sallow face a hand which seemed dried up by fever, and rubbed his nervous and agitated fingers across his beard. His large eyes, hollowed by sickness and inquietude, seemed to pursue, in the vague distance, a mournful and fixed idea.

"What physicians have you at Fontainebleau?" he inquired, after a long pause.

"We have three, my father."

"What are their names?"—"Luiniguet first."

"The next one?"

"A brother of the Carmelite order, named Brother Hubert."

"The next?"—"A secular member, named Grisart."

"Ah! Grisart?" murmured the monk. "Send for M. Grisart immediately."

The landlord moved in prompt obedience to the direction.

"Tell me, what priests are there here?"—"What priests?"

"Yes; belonging to what orders?"

"There are Jesuits, Augustines, and Cordeliers; but the Jesuits are the best at hand. Shall I send for a confessor belonging to the order of Jesuits?"—"Yes, immediately."

It will be imagined that, at the sign of the cross which they had exchanged, the landlord and the invalid-monk had recognised each other as affiliated members of the well-known society of Jesus. Left to himself, the Franciscan drew from his pocket a bundle of papers, some of which he read over with the most careful attention. The violence of his

disorder, however, overcame his courage ; his eyes rolled in their sockets, a cold sweat poured down his face, and he nearly fainted, and lay with his head thrown backwards and his arms hanging down on both sides of his chair. For more than five minutes he remained without any movement, when the landlord returned, bringing with him the physician, whom he had hardly allowed time to dress himself. The noise they made in entering the room, the current of air which the opening of the door had occasioned, restored the Franciscan to his senses. He hurriedly seized hold of the papers which were lying about, and with his long and bony hand concealed them under the cushions of the chair. The landlord went out of the room, leaving patient and physician together.

"Come here, Monsieur Grisart," said the Franciscan to the doctor ; "approach closer, for there is no time to lose. Try, by touch and sound, and consider and pronounce your sentence."

"The landlord," replied the doctor, "told me that I had the honour of attending an affiliated brother."

"Yes," replied the Franciscan, "it is so. Tell me the truth, then ; I feel very ill, and think I am about to die."

The physician took the monk's hand and felt his pulse. "Oh, oh," he said, "a dangerous fever."

"What do you call a dangerous fever?" inquired the Franciscan, with an imperious look.

"To an affiliated member of the first or second year," replied the physician, looking inquiringly at the monk, "I should say—a fever that may be cured."

"But to me?" said the Franciscan. The physician hesitated.

"Look at my grey hair, and my forehead, full of anxious thought," he continued, "look at the lines in my face, by which I reckon up the trials I have undergone ; I am a Jesuit of the eleventh year, Monsieur Grisart." The physician started, for, in fact, a Jesuit of the eleventh year was one of those men who had been initiated in all the secrets of the order, one of those for whom the science has no more secrets, the society no further barriers to present—temporal obedience, no more trammels.

"In that case," said Grisart, saluting him with respect, "I am in the presence of a master?"—"Yes ; act, therefore, accordingly."

"And you wish to know?"—"My real state."

"Well !" said the physician, "it is a brain fever, which has reached its highest degree of intensity."

"There is no hope, then?" inquired the Franciscan, in a quick tone of voice.

"I do not say that," replied the doctor ; "yet, considering the disordered state of the brain, the hurried respiration, the rapidity of the pulse, and the burning nature of the fever which is devouring you——"

"And which has thrice prostrated me, since this morning," said the monk.

"Therefore, I should call it a terrible attack. But why did you not stop on your road?"

"I was expected here, and I was obliged to come."

"Even at the risk of your life?"

"Yes, at the risk of dying !"

"Very well ! considering all the symptoms of your case, I must tell you that your condition is desperate." The Franciscan smiled in a strange manner.

"What you have just told me is, perhaps, sufficient for what is due to an affiliated member, even of the eleventh year ; but for what is due to

ie, Monsieur Grisart, it is too little, and I have a right to demand more. Come, then, let us be more candid still, and as frank as if you were making your own confession to Heaven. Besides, I have already sent for a confessor."

"Oh ! I hope, however," murmured the doctor.

"Answer me," said the sick man, displaying with a dignified gesture a golden ring, the stone of which had, until that moment, been turned inside, and which bore engraved thereon the distinguishing mark of the Society of Jesus.

Grisart uttered a loud exclamation. "The general !" he cried.

"Silence," said the Franciscan, "you now understand that the truth is everything."

"Monseigneur, monseigneur," murmured Grisart, "send for the confessor, for in two hours, at the next seizure, you will be attacked by delirium, and will pass away in the course of it."

"Very well," said the patient, for a moment contracting his eyebrows ; "I have still two hours to live then ?"

"Yes ; particularly if you take the potion I shall send you presently."

"And that will give me two hours more !"—"Two hours."

"I would take it, were it poison, for those two hours are necessary not only for myself, but for the glory of the order."

"What a loss, what a catastrophe for us all !" murmured the physician.

"It is the loss of one man, and nothing more," replied the Franciscan, and Heaven will enable the poor monk, who is about to leave you, to find a worthy successor. Adieu, Monsieur Grisart ; already even, through the goodness of Heaven, I have met with you. A physician who had not been one of our holy order, would have left me in ignorance of my condition ; and, relying that my existence might have been prolonged a few days further, I should not have taken the necessary precautions. You are a learned man, Monsieur Grisart, and that confers an honour upon us all ; it would have been repugnant to my feelings to have found one of our order of little standing in his profession. Adieu, Monsieur Grisart ; send me the cordial immediately."

"Give me your blessing, at least, monseigneur."

"In my mind, I do ; go, go ;—in my mind, I do so, I tell you—*animo*, Maître Grisart, *viribus impossibile*." And he again fell back on the arm-chair, in an almost senseless state. M. Grisart hesitated, whether he should give him immediate assistance, or should run to prepare the cordial he had promised. He, doubtless, decided in favour of the cordial, for he started out of the room and disappeared down the staircase.

## CHAPTER CXXVIII.

### THE STATE SECRET.

A FEW moments after the doctor's departure, the confessor arrived. He had hardly crossed the threshold of the door when the Franciscan fixed a penetrating look upon him, and, shaking his head, murmured—"A weak mind, I see ; may Heaven forgive me for dying without the help of this dying piece of human infirmity." The confessor, on his side, regarded the dying man with astonishment, almost with terror. He had never beheld eyes so burningly bright at the very moment they were about to close, nor looks so terrible at the moment they were about to be quenched in death. The Franciscan made a rapid and imperious movement of his

hand. "Sit down there, my father," he said, "and listen to me." The Jesuit confessor, a good priest, a recent member of the order, who had merely witnessed the initiation into its mysteries, yielded to the superiority assumed by the penitent.

"There are several persons staying in this hotel," continued the Franciscan.

"But," inquired the Jesuit, "I thought I had been summoned to receive confession. Is your remark, then, a confession?"

"Why do you ask me?"

"In order to know whether I am to keep your words secret."

"My remarks are part of my confession; I confide them to you in your character of a confessor."

"Very well," said the priest, seating himself on the chair which the Franciscan had, with great difficulty, just left, to lie down on the bed.

The Franciscan continued.—"I repeat, there are several persons staying in this inn."—"So I have heard."

"They ought to be eight in number."

The Jesuit made a sign that he understood him. "The first to whom I wish to speak," said the dying man, "is a German from Vienna, whose name is the Baron de Wostpur. Be kind enough to go to him, and tell him that the person he expected has arrived." The confessor, astounded, looked at his penitent; the confession seemed a singular one.

"Obey," said the Franciscan, in a tone of command impossible to resist. The good Jesuit, completely subdued, rose and left the room. As soon as he had gone, the Franciscan again took up the papers which a crisis of the fever had already, once before, obliged him to put aside.

"The Baron de Wostpur? Good!" he said; "ambitious, a fool, and straitened in his means."

He folded up the papers, which he thrust under his pillow. Rapid footsteps were heard at the end of the corridor. The confessor returned, followed by the Baron de Wostpur, who walked along with his head raised, as if he were discussing with himself the propriety of touching the ceiling with the feather in his hat. Therefore, at the appearance of the Franciscan, at his melancholy look, and at the plainness of the room, he stopped and inquired, "Who summoned me?"

"I," said the Franciscan, who turned towards the confessor, saying "My good father, leave us for a moment together; when this gentleman leaves, you will return here." The Jesuit left the room, and, doubtless, availed himself of this momentary exile from the presence of the dying man to ask the host for some explanation about this strange penitent, who treated his confessor no better than he would a man-servant. The baron approached the bed, and wished to speak, but the hand of the Franciscan imposed silence upon him.

"Every moment is precious," said the latter, hurriedly. "You have come here for the competition, have you not?"—"Yes, my father."

"You hope to be elected general of the order?"—"I hope so."

"You know on what conditions only you can possibly attain this high position, which makes one man the master of monarchs, the equal of Popes?"

"Who are you," inquired the baron, "to subject me to these interrogatories?"—"I am he whom you expected."

"The elector-general?"—"I am the elected."

"You are——"

The Franciscan did not give him time to reply: he extended his

drunken hand, on which glittered the ring of the general of the order. The baron drew back in surprise ; and then, immediately afterwards, bowing with the profoundest respect, he exclaimed, "Is it possible that you are here, monseigneur ; you, in this wretched room ; you, upon this miserable bed ; you, in search of and selecting the future general, that is, your own successor !"

"Do not distress yourself about that, monsieur, but fulfil immediately the principal condition, of furnishing the order with a secret of importance, such as one of the greatest courts of Europe can, by your instrumentality, for ever confer upon the order. Well ! do you possess the secret which you promised, in your request, addressed to the grand council ?"

"Monseigneur——"

"Let us proceed, however, in due order," said the monk. "You are the baron de Wostpur?"—"Yes, monseigneur."

"And this letter is from you?"

The general of the Jesuits drew a paper from his bundle, and presented it to the baron, who glanced at it, and made a sign in the affirmative, saying, "Yes, monseigneur, this letter is mine."

"Can you show me the reply which the secretary of the grand council returned to you."

"This is it," said the baron, holding towards the Franciscan a letter, bearing simply the address, "To his excellency the Baron de Wostpur," and containing only this phrase, "From the 15th to the 22nd May, Fontainebleau, the hôtel of the 'Beau-Paon.'—A.M.D.G."\*

"Right !" said the Franciscan, "and now speak."

"I have a body of troops, composed of 50,000 men ; all the officers are trained. I am encamped on the Danube. In four days I can overthrow the emperor, who is, as you are aware, opposed to the progress of our order, and can replace him by whichever of the princes of his family the order may determine upon." The Franciscan listened unmoved.

"Is that all ?" he said.

"A revolution throughout Europe is included in my plan," said the baron.

"Very well, Monsieur de Wostpur, you will receive a reply ; return to your room, and leave Fontainebleau within a quarter of an hour."

The baron withdrew backwards, just as obsequiously as if he were taking leave of the emperor he was ready to betray.

"There is no secret there," murmured the Franciscan, "it is a plot. Besides," he added, after a moment's reflection, "the future of Europe is no longer in the House of Austria."

And with a pencil which he held in his hand he struck the Baron de Wostpur's name from the list.

"Now for the cardinal," he said ; "we ought to get something more serious from the side of Spain."

Raising his head, he perceived the confessor, who was awaiting his orders as submissively as a school-boy.

"Ah, ah !" he said, noticing his submissive air, "you have been talking with the landlord."

"Yes, monseigneur ; and to the physician."

"To Grisart ?"—"Yes."

"He is here, then ?"

"He is waiting with the potion he promised."

"Very well ; if I require him I will call ; you now understand the great importance of my confession, do you not?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Then go and fetch me the Spanish Cardinal Herrebia. Make haste. Only, as you now understand the matter in hand, you will remain near me, for I begin to feel faint."

"Shall I summon the physician?"

"Not yet, not yet . . . the Spanish cardinal . . . no one else. Fly!"

Five minutes afterwards, the cardinal, pale and disturbed, entered the little room.

"I am informed, monseigneur——" stammered out the cardinal.

"To the point," said the Franciscan, in a faint voice, showing the cardinal a letter which he had written to the Grand Council. "Is that your handwriting?"

"Yes, but——"

"And your summons here?"

The cardinal hesitated to answer. His purple revolted against the mean garb of the poor Franciscan, who stretched out his hand and displayed the ring, which produced its effect, greater in proportion as the greatness of the person increased over whom the Franciscan exercised his influence.

"Quick, the secret, the secret!" said the dying man, leaning upon his confessor.

"*Coram isto?*" inquired the Spanish cardinal.

"Speak in Spanish," said the Franciscan, showing the liveliest attention.

"You are aware, monseigneur," said the cardinal, continuing the conversation in the Castilian dialect, "that the condition of the marriage of the Infanta with the king of France is the absolute renunciation of the rights of the said Infanta, as well as of King Louis XIV., to all claim to the crown of Spain." The Franciscan made a sign in the affirmative.

"The consequence is," continued the cardinal, "that the peace and alliance between the two kingdoms, depend upon the observance of that clause of the contract." A similar sign from the Franciscan. "Not only France and Spain," continued the cardinal, "but the whole of Europe even, would be violently rent asunder by the faithlessness of either party." Another movement of the dying man's head.

"It further results," continued the speaker, "that the man who might be able to foresee events, and to render certain that which is no more than a vague idea floating in the mind of man ; that is to say, the idea of future good or evil, would preserve the world from a great catastrophe ; and the event, which has no fixed certainty even in the brain of him who originated it, could be turned to the advantage of our order."

"*Pronto, pronto!*" murmured the Franciscan, who suddenly became paler, and leaned upon the priest. The cardinal approached the ear of the dying man, and said,—"Well, monseigneur, I know that the king of France has determined that, at the first pretext, a death for instance, either that of the king of Spain or that of a brother of the Infanta, France will, arms in hand, claim the inheritance, and I have in my possession already prepared the plan of policy agreed upon by Louis XIV. for this occasion."

"And this plan?" said the Franciscan.

"Here it is," returned the cardinal.

"In whose handwriting is it?"—"In my own."

"Have you anything further to say to me?"

"I think I have said a good deal, my lord," replied the cardinal.

"Yes, you have rendered the order a great service. But how did you procure the details, by the aid of which you have constructed your plan?"

"I have the under servants of the king of France in my pay, and I obtain from them all the waste papers, which have been saved from being burnt."

"Very ingenious," murmured the Franciscan, endeavouring to smile; you will leave this hotel, cardinal, in a quarter of an hour, and a reply all be sent you." The cardinal withdrew.

"Call Grisart, and desire the Venetian Marini to come," said the sick man.

While the confessor obeyed, the Franciscan, instead of striking out the cardinal's name, as he had done the baron's, made a cross at the side of

Then, exhausted by the effort, he fell back on his bed, murmuring the name of Doctor Grisart. When he returned to his senses, he had drunk about half of the potion, of which the remainder was left in the glass, and he found himself supported by the physician, while the Venetian and the confessor were standing close to the door. The Venetian submitted to the same formalities as his two predecessors, hesitated as they had done at the sight of the two strangers, but his confidence restored by the order of the general, he revealed, that the pope, terrified at the power of the order, was weaving a plot for the general expulsion of the Jesuits, and was tampering with the different courts of Europe, in order to obtain their assistance. He described the pontiff's auxiliaries, his means of action, and indicated the particular locality in the Archipelago, where, by a sudden surprise, two cardinals, adepts of the eleventh year, and, consequently, high in authority, were to be transported, together with thirty-two of the principal affiliated members of Rome. The Franciscan thanked the Signor Marini. It was by no means a slight service he had rendered the society by denouncing this pontifical project. The Venetian thereupon received directions to set off in a quarter of an hour, and left as radiant as if he already possessed the ring, the sign of the supreme authority of the society. As, however, he was departing, the Franciscan murmured to himself:—"All these men are either spies, or a sort of police, not one of them a general; they have all discovered a plot, but not one of them a secret. It is not by means of ruin, or war, or force, that the Society of Jesus is to be governed, but by that mysterious influence which a moral superiority confers. No, the man is not yet found, and, to complete the misfortune, Heaven strikes me down, and I am dying. Oh! must the society indeed fall with me for want of a column to support it? Must death, which is waiting for me, swallow up with me the future of the order? That future which ten years more of my own life would have rendered eternal; for that future, with the reign of the new king, is opening radiant and full of splendour." These words, which had been half-reflected, half-pronounced aloud, were listened to by the Jesuit confessor with a terror similar to that with which one listens to the wanderings of a person attacked by fever, whilst Grisart, with a mind of a higher order, devoured them as the revelations of an unknown world, in which his looks were plunged without ability to attain them. Suddenly the Franciscan recovered himself.

"Let us finish this," he said, "death is approaching. Oh! just now I was dying resignedly, for I hoped . . . while now I sink in despair, unless those who remain . . . Grisart, Grisart, make me live but an hour longer."

Grisart approached the dying monk, and made him swallow a few drops, not of the potion which was still left in the glass, but of the contents of a small bottle he had upon his person.

"Call the Scotchman!" exclaimed the Franciscan; "call the Bremen merchant. Call, call, quickly. I am dying. I am suffocated."

The confessor darted forward to seek for assistance, as if there had been any human strength which could hold back the hand of death, which was weighing down the sick man; but, at the threshold of the door, he found Aramis, who, with his finger on his lips, like the statue of Harpocrates, the god of silence, by a look motioned him back to the end of the apartment. The physician and the confessor after having consulted each other by their looks made a movement, however, as if to push Aramis aside, who, however, with two signs of the cross, each made in a different manner, transfixed them both in their places.

"A chief!" they both murmured.

Aramis slowly advanced into the room where the dying man was struggling against the first attack of the agony which had seized him. As for the Franciscan, whether owing to the effect of the elixir, or whether the appearance of Aramis had restored his strength, he made a movement, and his eyes glaring, his mouth half open, and his hair damp with sweat, sat up upon the bed. Aramis felt that the air of the room was stifling; the windows were closed; the fire was burning upon the hearth; a pair of candles of yellow wax were guttering down in the copper candlesticks, and still further increased, by their thick smoke, the temperature of the room. Aramis opened the window, and fixing upon the dying man a look full of intelligence and respect, said to him: "Monseigneur, pray forgive my coming in this manner, before you summoned me, but your state alarms me, and I thought you might possibly die before you had seen me, for I am only the sixth on your list."

The dying man started and looked at the list.

"You are, therefore, he who was formerly called Aramis, and since, the Chevalier d'Herblay? You are the Bishop of Vannes, then?"

"Yes, my lord."—"I know you, I have seen you."

"At the last jubilee we were with the Holy Father together."

"Yes, yes, I remember; and you place yourself on the list of candidates."

"Monseigneur, I have heard it said that the order required to become possessed of a great state secret, and knowing that from modesty you had in anticipation resigned your functions in favour of the person who should be the depositary of this secret, I wrote to say that I was ready to compete, possessing alone a secret which I believe to be important."

"Speak," said the Franciscan, "I am ready to listen to you, and to judge of the importance of the secret."

"A secret of the value of that which I have the honour to confide to you, cannot be communicated by word of mouth. Any idea which, when once expressed, has thereby lost its safeguard, and has become vulgarised by any manifestation or communication of it whatever, no longer is the property of him who gave it birth. My words may be overheard by some listener, or perhaps by an enemy; one ought not, therefore, to speak at random, for, in such a case, the secret would cease to be one."

"How do you propose, then, to convey your secret?" inquired the dying monk.

With one hand Aramis signed to the physician and the confessor to withdraw, and with the other he handed to the Franciscan a paper enclosed in a double envelope. "Is not writing more dangerous still than language?"

"No, my lord," said Aramis, "for you will find within this envelope,

characters which you and I can alone understand." The Franciscan looked at Aramis with an astonishment which momentarily increased.

"It is a cipher," continued the latter, "which you used in 1655, and which your secretary, Ivan Injan, who is dead, could alone decipher, if he were to be restored to life." — "You knew this cipher, then?"

"It was I who taught it him," said Aramis, bowing with a gracefulness full of respect, and advancing towards the door as if to leave the room; but a gesture of the Franciscan, accompanied by a cry for him to remain, detained him.

"*Ecce homo!*" he exclaimed; then reading the paper a second time, he called out, "Approach, approach quickly!"

Aramis returned to the side of the Franciscan, with the same calm countenance and the same respectful manner, unchanged. The Franciscan, extending his arm, burnt by the flame of the candle the paper which Aramis had handed him. Then, taking hold of Aramis's hand, he drew him towards him, and inquired:—"In what manner and by whose means could you possibly become acquainted with such a secret."

"Through Madame de Chevreuse, the intimate friend and *confidante* of the queen."

"And Madame de Chevreuse——"——"Is dead."

"Did any others know it?"

"A man and woman only, and they of the lower classes."

"Who are they?"——"Persons who had brought him up."

"What has become of them?"

"Dead also. This secret burns like fire."

"And you have survived?"——"No one is aware that I know it."

"And for what length of time have you possessed this secret?"

"For the last fifteen years."

"And you have kept it?"——"I wished to live."

"And you give it to the order without ambition, without acknowledgment?"

"I give it to the order with ambition and with a hope of return," said Aramis; "for if you live, my lord, you will make of me, now you know me, what I can and ought to be."

"And as I am dying," exclaimed the Franciscan, "I constitute you my successor . . . . Thus." And drawing off the ring, he passed it on Aramis's finger. Then, turning towards the two spectators of this scene, he said: "Be ye witnesses of this, and testify, if need be, that, sick in body, but sound in mind, I have freely and voluntarily bestowed this ring, the token of supreme authority, upon Monseigneur d'Herblay, Bishop of Angoulême, whom I nominate my successor, and before whom I, an humble sinner, about to appear before Heaven, prostrate myself the first, as an example for all to follow." And the Franciscan bowed lowly and submissively, whilst the physician and the Jesuit fell on their knees. Aramis, even while he became paler than the dying man himself, bent his looks successively upon all the actors of this scene. His gratified ambition bowed with his blood towards his heart.

"We must lose no time," said the Franciscan; "what I had to do here is urgent. I shall never succeed in carrying it out."

"I will do it," said Aramis.

"That's well," said the Franciscan, and then turning towards the Jesuit and the doctor, he added, "Leave us alone," a direction which they instantly obeyed.

"With this sign," he said, "you are the man needed to shake the world

from one end to the other ; with this sign you will overthrow ; with this sign you will edify ; *in hoc signo vinces !*"

"Close the door," continued the Franciscan, after a pause. Aramis shut and bolted the door, and returned to the side of the Franciscan.

"The pope has conspired against the order," said the monk, "the pope must die."—"He shall die," said Aramis, quietly.

"Seven hundred thousand livres are owing to a Bremen merchant of the name of Donstett, who came here to get the guarantee of my signature."

"He shall be paid," said Aramis.

"Six knights of Malta, whose names are written here, have discovered, by the indiscreetness of one of the affiliated of the eleventh year, the three mysteries ; it must be ascertained what these men have done with the secret, to get it back again and crush it."—"It shall be done."

"Three dangerous affiliated members must be sent away into Thibet, to perish there ; they are condemned. Here are their names."

"I will see that the sentence be carried out."

"Lastly, there is a lady at Anvers, grand-niece of Ravailiac ; she holds certain papers in her hands which compromise the order. There has been payable to the family during the last fifty-one years a pension of fifty-thousand livres. The pension is a heavy one, and the order is not wealthy. Redeem the papers for a sum of money paid down, or in case of refusal, stop the pension—but without risk."

"I will think about what is best to be done," said Aramis.

"A vessel chartered from Lima will have entered the port of Lisbon last week ; ostensibly it is laden with chocolate, in reality with gold. Every ingot is concealed by a coating of chocolate. The vessel belongs to the order ; it is worth seventeen millions of livres, you will see that claim is laid to it ; here are the bills of lading."

"To what port shall I direct it to be taken ?"—"To Bayonne."

"Before three weeks are over it shall be there, wind and weather permitting. Is that all ?" The Franciscan made a sign in the affirmative, for he could no longer speak ; the blood rushed to his throat and his head, and gushed from his mouth, his nostrils, and his eyes. The dying man had barely time to press Aramis's hand, when he fell in convulsions from his bed upon the floor. Aramis placed his hand on the Franciscan's heart, but it had ceased to beat. As he stooped down, Aramis observed that a fragment of the paper he had given the Franciscan had escaped being burnt. He picked it up, and burnt it to the last atom. Then, summoning the confessor and the physician, he said to the former :—"Your penitent is in heaven ; he needs nothing more than prayers and the burial bestowed on the dead. Go and prepare what is necessary for a simple interment, such as a poor monk only would require. Go."

The Jesuit left the room. Then, turning towards the physician, and observing his pale and anxious face, he said, in a low tone of voice :—"Monsieur Grisart, empty and clean this glass ; there is too much left in it of what the grand council desired you to put in." Grisart, amazed, overcome, completely astounded, almost fell backwards in his extreme terror. Aramis shrugged his shoulders in sign of pity, took the glass and poured out the contents among the ashes of the hearth. He then left the room, carrying the papers of the dead man with him.

## CHAPTER CXXIX.

## MISSION.

THE next day, or rather the same day (for the events we have just described had been concluded only at three o'clock in the morning), before breakfast was served, and as the king was preparing to go to mass with the two queens ; as Monsieur, with the Chevalier de Lorraine, and a few other intimate companions, was mounting his horse to set off for the river, to take one of those celebrated baths about which the ladies of the court were almost mad ; as, in fact, no one remained in the *château*, with the exception of Madame, who, under the pretext of indisposition, would not leave her room ; Montalais was seen, or rather was not seen, to glide stealthily out of the room appropriated to the maids of honour, leading La Vallière after her, who tried to conceal herself as much as possible, and both of them, hurrying secretly through the gardens, succeeded, looking round them at every step they took, in reaching the thicket. The weather was cloudy, a hot air bowed the flowers and the shrubs before its blast ; the burning dust swept along in clouds by the wind, was whirled in eddies towards the trees. Montalais, who, during their progress, had discharged the functions of a clever scout, advanced a few steps further, and, turning round again, to be quite sure that no one was either listening or approaching, said to her companion, "Thank goodness, we are quite alone ! Since yesterday every one spies us here, and a circle seems to be drawn round us, as if we were plague-stricken." La Vallière bent down her head and sighed, "It is positively unheard of," continued Montalais ; "from M. d'Alcornet to M. de Saint-Aignan, every one wishes to get hold of our secret. Come, Louise, let us concert a little together, in order that I may now what to do."

La Vallière lifted up towards her companion her beautiful eyes, pure and deep as the azure of a spring-time sky, "And I," she said, "I will ask you why have we been summoned to Madame's own apartment ? Why have we slept close to her apartment, instead of sleeping as usual in our own ? Why did you return so late, and whence are these measures of strict supervision which have been adopted since this morning, with respect to us both ?"

"My dear Louise, you answer my question by another, or rather, by ten others, which is not answering me at all. I will tell you all you want to know later, and, as they are matters of secondary importance, you can wait. What I ask you—for everything will depend upon that—is, whether there is or is not any secret ?"

"I do not know if there is any secret," said La Vallière ; "but I do know, for my own part at least, that there has been great imprudence committed. Since the foolish remark I made, and my still more silly fainting yesterday, every one here is making remarks about us."

"Speak for yourself," said Montalais, laughing, "speak for yourself and for Tonnay-Charente ; for both of you made your declarations of love to the skies, and which unfortunately were intercepted."

La Vallière hung down her head. "Really you overwhelm me," she said.—"I ?"—"Yes, you kill me with your jests."

"Listen to me, Louise. These are no jests, for nothing is more serious ; on the contrary, I did not drag you out of the *château* ; I did not miss attending mass ; I did not pretend to have a cold, as Madame did, and which she has as much as I have ; and, lastly, I did not display ten times

more diplomacy than M. Colbert inherited from M. de Mazarin, and makes use of with respect to M. Fouquet, in order to find means of confiding my perplexities to you, for the sole end and purpose that when, at last, we are alone, and no one can listen to us, you are to deal hypocritically with me. No, no ; believe me, that when I ask you any questions, it is not from curiosity alone, but really because the position is a critical one. What you said yesterday is now known,—it is a text on which every one is discoursing. Every one embellishes it to the utmost, and does so according to his own fancy ; you had the honour last night, and you have it still to-day, of occupying the whole court, my dear Louise ; and the number of tender and witty remarks which have been ascribed to you, would make Mademoiselle de Scudery and her brother burst from very spite, if they were faithfully reported to them."

"But, dearest Montalais," said the poor girl, "you know better than any one what I did say, since you were present when I said it."

"Yes, I know. But that is not the question. I have even not forgotten a single syllable you said ; but did you think what you were saying ?"

Louise became confused. "What," she exclaimed, "more questions still ! Oh, heavens ! when I would give the whole world to forget what I did say, how does it happen that every one does all he possibly can to remind me of it ? Oh, this is indeed terrible !"—"What is ?"

"To have a friend who ought to spare me, who might advise me and help me to save myself, and yet who is destroying—is killing me."

"There, there, that will do," said Montalais ; "after having said too little, you now say too much. No one thinks of killing you, nor even of robbing you, even of your secret ; I wish to have it voluntarily, and in no other way ; for the question does not concern your own affairs only, but ours also ; and Tonnay-Charente would tell you as I do, if she were here. For, the fact is, that last evening she wished to have some private conversation in our room, and I was going there after the Manicampian and Malicornian colloquies had terminated, when I learnt, on my return, rather late it is true, that Madame had sequestered her maids of honour, and that we are to sleep in her apartments, instead of our own room. Moreover, Madame has sequestered her maids of honour in order that they should not have the time to concert any measures together, and this morning she was closeted with Tonnay-Charente with the same object. Tell me, then, to what extent Athenaïs and I can rely upon you, as we will tell you in what way you can rely upon us ?"

"I do not clearly understand the question you have put," said Louise much agitated.

"Hum ! and yet, on the contrary, you seem to understand me very well. However, I will put my questions in a more precise manner, in order that you may not be able, in the slightest degree to evade them. Listen to me. *Do you love M. de Bragelonne ?* That is plain enough, is it not ?"

At this question, which fell like the first projectile of a besieging army into a besieged town, Louise started. "You ask me," she exclaimed, "if I love Raoul, the friend of my childhood,—my brother almost ?"

"No, no, no ! Again you evade me, or rather, you wish to escape me. I do not ask you if you love Raoul, your childhood's friend—your brother ; but I ask if you love the Vicomte de Bragelonne, your affianced husband ?"

"Good heavens ! my dear Montalais," said Louise, "how severe your tone is !"

"You deserve no indulgence,—I am neither more nor less severe than usual. I put a question to you, so answer it."

"You certainly do not," said Louise, in a choking voice, "speak to me as a friend; but I will answer you as a true friend."

"Well, do so."

"Very well; my heart is full of scruples and silly feelings of pride, with respect to everything that a woman ought to keep secret, and in this respect no one has ever read into the bottom of my soul."

"That I know very well. If I had read it, I should not interrogate you as I have done; I should simply say,—'My good Louise, you have the happiness of an acquaintance with M. de Bragelonne, who is an excellent young man, and an advantageous match for a girl without any fortune. M. de la Fère will leave something like fifteen thousand livres a year to his son. At a future day, then, you, as this son's wife, will have fifteen thousand livres a year, which is not bad. Turn, then, neither to the right and nor to the left, but go frankly to M. de Bragelonne; that is to say, to the altar to which he will lead you. Afterwards, why—afterwards, according to his disposition, you will be emancipated or enslaved; in other words, you will have a right to commit any piece of folly which people commit who have either too much liberty or too little.' That is, my dear Louise, what I should have told you at first, if I had been able to read your heart."

"And I should have thanked you," stammered out Louise, "although the advice does not appear to me to be altogether good."

"Wait, wait. But immediately after having given you that advice, I should add: 'Louise, it is very dangerous to pass whole days with your head reclining on your bosom, your hands unoccupied, your eyes restless and full of thought; it is dangerous to prefer the least frequented paths, and no longer to be amused with such diversions as gladden young girls' hearts; it is dangerous, Louise, to write with the point of your foot, as you do, upon the gravel, certain letters which it is useless for you to efface, but which appear again under your heel, particularly when those letters rather resemble the letter L, than the letter B; and, lastly, it is dangerous to allow the mind to dwell on a thousand wild fancies, the fruits of solitude and headaches; these fancies, while they sink into a young girl's mind, make her cheeks sink in also, so that it is not unusual, on these occasions, to find the most delightful persons in the world become the most disagreeable, and the wittiest to become the dullest.'"

"I thank you, dearest Aure," replied La Vallière, gently; "it is like you to speak to me in this manner, and I thank you for it."

"It was only for the benefit of wild dreamers, such as I described, that I spoke; do not take any of my words, then, to yourself except such as you think you deserve. Stay, I hardly know what story recurs to my memory of some silly or melancholy young girl, who was gradually pining away because she fancied that the prince, or the king, or the emperor, whoever it was—and it does not much matter which—had fallen completely in love with her; while, on the contrary, the prince, or the king, or the emperor, whichever you please, was plainly in love with some one else, and—a singular circumstance, one, indeed, which she could not perceive, although every one around and about her, perceived it clearly enough—made use of her as a screen for his own love affair. You laugh as I do, at this poor silly girl, do you not, Louise?"

"I laugh of course," stammered out Louise, pale as death.

"And you are right, too, for the thing is amusing enough. The story, whether true or false, amused me, and so I have remembered it and told it to you. Just imagine, then, my good Louise, the mischief that such a

melancholy would create in your brain,—a melancholy, I mean, of that kind. For my own part, I resolved to tell you the story; for, if such a thing were to happen to either of us, it would be most essential to be assured of its truth; to-day it is a snare, to-morrow it will become a jest and mockery, the next day it will be death itself.” La Vallière started again, and became, if possible, still paler.

“Whenever a king takes notice of us,” continued Montalais, “he lets us see it easily enough, and, if we happen to be the object he covets, he knows very well how to gain his object. You see, then, Louise, that in such circumstances, between young girls exposed to such a danger as the one in question, the most perfect confidence should exist, in order that those hearts which are not disposed towards melancholy, may watch over those who are likely to become so.”

“Silence, silence!” said La Vallière; “some one approaches.”

“Some one is approaching in fact,” said Montalais; “but who can it possibly be? Everybody is away, either at mass with the king, or bathing with Monsieur.”

At the end of the walk the young girls perceived almost immediately, beneath the arching trees, the graceful carriage and noble height of a young man, who, with his sword under his arm and a cloak thrown across his shoulders, and booted and spurred besides, saluted them from the distance with a gentle smile. “Raoul!” exclaimed Montalais.

“M. de Bragelonne!” murmured Louise.

“A very proper judge to decide upon our difference of opinion,” said Montalais.

“Oh, Montalais, Montalais, for pity’s sake,” exclaimed La Vallière “after having been so cruel, show me a little mercy!” These words, uttered with all the fervour of a prayer, effaced all trace of irony, if not from Montalais’ heart, at least from her face.

“Why, you are as handsome as Amadis, Monsieur de Bragelonne,” she cried to Raoul, “and armed and booted like him!”

“A thousand compliments, young ladies,” replied Raoul, bowing.

“But why, I ask, are you booted in this manner?” repeated Montalais; whilst La Vallière, although she looked at Raoul with a surprise equal to that of her companion, nevertheless uttered not a word.

“Why?” inquired Raoul. — “Yes,” ventured Louise.

“Because I am about to set off,” said Bragelonne, looking at Louise.

The young girl seemed as though smitten by some superstitious feeling of terror, and tottered. “You are going away, Raoul!” she cried; “and where are you going?”

“Dearest Louise,” he replied, with that quiet, composed manner which was natural to him, “I am going to England.”

“What are you going to do in England?”

“The king has sent me there.”

“The king!” exclaimed Louise and Aure together, involuntarily exchanging glances, the conversation which had just been interrupted recurring to them both. Raoul intercepted the glance, but he could not understand its meaning, and, naturally enough, attributed it to the interest which both the young girls took in him.

“His majesty,” he said, “has been good enough to remember that the Comte de la Fère is high in favour with King Charles II. This morning, then, as he was on his way to attend mass, the king, seeing me as he passed, signed to me to approach, which I accordingly did. ‘Monsieur de Bragelonne,’ he said to me, ‘you will call upon M. Fouquet, who has

ceived from me letters for the King of Great Britain ; you will be the arer of them.' I bowed. 'Ah !' his majesty added, 'before you leave, you will be good enough to take any commissions which Madame may give for the king her brother.'

"Gracious Heaven !" murmured Louise, much agitated, and yet full of thought at the same time.

"So quickly ! You are desired to set off in such haste !" said Montalais, most paralysed by this unforeseen event.

"Properly to obey those whom we respect," said Raoul, "it is necessary to obey quickly. Within ten minutes after I had received the order, I was ready. Madame, already informed, is writing the letter which she is good enough to do me the honour of entrusting to me. In the meantime, learning from Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente that it was likely you would be in this direction, I came here, and am happy to find you both."

"And both of us very suffering, as you see," said Montalais, going to Louise's assistance, whose countenance was visibly altered.

"Suffering ?" repeated Raoul, pressing Louise's hand with a tender curiosity. "Your hand is like ice."—"It is nothing."

"This coldness does not reach your heart, Louise, does it ?" inquired the young man, with a tender smile. Louise raised her head hastily, as if this question had been inspired by some suspicion, and had aroused a feeling of remorse.

"Oh, you know," she said, with an effort, "that my heart will never be cold towards a friend like yourself, Monsieur de Bragelonne."

"Thank you, Louise. I know both your heart and your mind, and it is not by the touch of the hand that one can judge of an affection like yours. You know, Louise, how devotedly I love you, with what perfect and unreserved confidence I have resigned my life to you ; will you not forgive me, then, for speaking to you with something like the frankness of a child ?"

"Speak, Monsieur Raoul," said Louise, trembling very much ; "I am listening."

"I cannot part from you, carrying away with me a thought which torments me. Absurd I know it to be, and yet one which rends my very heart."

"Are you going away, then, for any length of time ?" inquired La Vallière, with a thickened utterance, while Montalais turned her head aside.

"No ; and probably I shall not be absent more than a fortnight." La Vallière pressed her hand upon her heart, which felt as though it were breaking.

"It is strange," pursued Raoul, looking at the young girl with a melancholy expression, "I have often left you when setting off on adventures fraught with danger. Then I started joyously enough—my heart free, my mind intoxicated by the thought of happiness in store for me, of hopes of which the future was full ; and yet, at that time, I was about to face the Spanish cannon, or the halberds of the Walloons. To-day, without the existence of any danger or uneasiness, and by the easiest manner in the world, I am going in search of a glorious recompense, which this mark of the king's favour seems to indicate ; for I am, perhaps, going to win you, Louise. What other favour, more precious than yourself, could the king confer upon me ? Yet, Louise, in very truth, I know not how or why, but this happiness and this future seem to vanish from my eyes like smoke—like an idle dream ; and I feel here, here, at the very bottom of my heart, a deep-seated grief, a dejection which I cannot overcome—something heavy, passionless, death-like, resembling a corpse. Oh, Louise, too well

do I know why ; it is because I have never loved you so truly as now God help me !”

At this last exclamation, which issued, as it were, from a broken heart, Louise burst into tears, and threw herself into Montalais's arms. The latter, although she was not very easily impressed, felt the tears rush to her eyes. Raoul saw only the tears which Louise shed ; his look, however, did not penetrate—nay, sought not to penetrate—beyond those tears. He bent his knee before her, and tenderly kissed her hand ; and it was evident that in that kiss he poured out his whole heart before her.

“Rise, rise,” said Montalais to him, herself ready to cry ; “for Athenais is coming.”

Raoul rose, brushed his knee with the back of his hand, smiled again upon Louise, whose eyes were fixed on the ground, and, having pressed Montalais's hand gratefully, he turned round to salute Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, the sound of whose silken robe was already heard upon the gravel-walk. “Has Madame finished her letter ?” he inquired, when the young girl came within reach of his voice.

“Yes, the letter is finished, sealed, and her royal highness is ready to receive you.”

Raoul, at this remark, hardly gave himself time to salute Athenais, cast one last look at Louise, bowed to Montalais, and withdrew in the direction of the château. As he withdrew he again turned round, but at last, at the end of the grand walk, it was useless to do so again, as he could no longer see them. The three young girls, on their side, had, with very different feelings, watched him disappear.

“At last,” said Athenais, the first to interrupt the silence, “at last we are alone, free to talk of yesterday's great affair, and to come to an understanding upon the conduct it is advisable for us to pursue. Besides, if you will listen to me,” she continued, looking round on all sides, “I will explain to you, as briefly as possible, in the first place, our own duty, such as I imagine it to be, and if you do not understand a hint, what is Madame's desire on the subject.” And Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente pronounced these words in such a tone as to leave no doubt, in her companion's minds, upon the official character with which she was invested.

“Madame's desire !” exclaimed Montalais and La Vallière together.

“Her *ultimatum*,” replied Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, diplomatically.

“But,” murmured La Vallière, “does Madame know, then——”

“Madame knows more about the matter than we said, even,” said Athenais, in a formal, precise manner. “Therefore, let us come to a proper understanding.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Montalais, “and I am listening in breathless attention.”

“Gracious Heaven !” murmured Louise, trembling, “shall I ever survive this cruel evening ?”

“Oh ! do not frighten yourself in that manner,” said Athenais ; “we have found a remedy for it.” So, seating herself between her two companions, and taking each of them by the hand, which she held in her own, she began. The first words were hardly spoken, when they heard a horse galloping away over the stones of the public high-road, outside the gates of the château.

## CHAPTER CXXX.

## HAPPY AS A PRINCE.

AT the very moment he was about entering the château, Bragelonne had met De Guiche. But before having been met by Raoul, De Guiche had met Manicamp, who had met Malicorne. How was it that Malicorne had met Manicamp? Nothing more simple, for he had awaited his return from Mass, where he had accompanied M. de Saint-Aignan. When they had met, they congratulated each other upon their good fortune, and Manicamp had availed himself of the circumstance to ask his friend if he had not a few crowns still remaining at the bottom of his pocket. The latter, without expressing any surprise at the question, and which he expected perhaps, had answered that every pocket which is always being drawn upon without anything ever being put in it, greatly resembles those wells which can supply water during the winter, but which the gardeners render useless by exhausting them during the summer; that his, Malicorne's pocket, certainly was deep, and that there would be a pleasure in drawing on it in times of plenty, but that, unhappily, abuse had produced barrenness. To this remark, Manicamp, deep in thought, had replied, "Quite true!"

"The question, then, is how to fill it?" Malicorne had added.

"Of course; but in what way?"

"Nothing easier, my dear Monsieur Manicamp."

"So much the better. How?"

"A post in Monsieur's household, and the pocket is full again."

"You have the post?"

"That is, I have the promise of being nominated."

"Well?"—"Yes; but the promise of nomination, without the post itself, is the purse without money."

"Quite true," Manicamp had replied a second time.

"Let us try for the post, then," the candidate had persisted.

"My dear fellow," sighed Manicamp, "an appointment in his royal highness's household is one of the gravest difficulties of our position."

"Oh! oh!"

"There is no question that, at the present moment, we cannot ask Monsieur for anything."

"Why so?"—"Because we are not on good terms with him."

"A great absurdity, too," said Malicorne promptly.

"Bah! and if we were to show Madame any attention," said Manicamp, "frankly speaking, do you think we should please Monsieur?"

"Precisely; if we show Madame any attention, and do so adroitly, Monsieur ought to adore us."—"Hum!"

"Either that, or we are great fools; make haste, therefore, M. Manicamp, you who are so able a politician, to make M. de Guiche and his royal highness friendly again."

"Tell me, what did M. de Saint-Aignan tell you, Malicorne?"

"Tell me? nothing; he asked me several questions, and that was all."

"Well, he was less discreet, then, with me."

"What did he tell you?"

"That the king is passionately in love with Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

"We knew that already," replied Malicorne, ironically; "and everybody talks about it loud enough for every one to know it; but in the meantime, do what I advise you; speak to M. de Guiche, and endeavour to get him to make an advance towards Monsieur. Deuce take it! he owes his royal highness that, at least."

"But we must see De Guiche, then?"

"There does not seem to be any great difficulty in that; try to see him in the same way I tried to see you; wait for him, you know that he is naturally very fond of walking."

"Yes; but whereabouts does he walk?"

"What a question to ask! Do you not know that he is in love with Madame?"—"So it is said."

"Very well; you will find him walking about on the side of the château where her apartments are."

"Stay, my dear Malicorne, you were not mistaken, for here he is coming."

"Why should I be mistaken? Have you ever noticed that I am in the habit of making a mistake? Come, we only need to understand each other. Are you in want of money?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Manicamp, mournfully.

"Well, I want my appointment. Let Malicorne have the appointment, and Manicamp shall have the money. There is no greater difficulty in the way than that."

"Very well; in that case make yourself easy. I will do my best."

"Do so."

De Guiche approached, Malicorne stepped aside, and Manicamp caught hold of De Guiche, who was thoughtful and melancholy. "Tell me, my dear comte, what rhyme you were trying to find," said Manicamp. "I have an excellent one to match yours, particularly if yours ends in *ame*."

De Guiche shook his head, and, recognising a friend, he took him by the arm. "My dear Manicamp," he said, "I am in search of something very different from a rhyme."

"What is it you are looking for?"

"You will help me to find what I am in search of," continued the comte; "you, who are such an idle fellow, in other words, a man with a mind full of ingenious devices?"

"I am getting my ingenuity ready, then, my dear comte."

"This is the state of the case, then: I wish to approach to a particular house, where I have some business."

"You must get near to the house, then," said Manicamp.

"Very good; but in this house dwells a husband who happens to be jealous."

"Is he more jealous than the dog Cerberus?"

"Not more, but quite as much so."

"Has he three mouths, as that obdurate guardian of the infernal regions had? Do not shrug your shoulders, my dear comte; I put the question to you with a perfect reason for doing so, since poets pretend that, in order to soften Monsieur Cerberus, the visitor must take something enticing with him—a cake, for instance. Therefore I, who view the matter in a prosaic light, that is to say, the light of reality, I say: one cake is very little for three mouths. If your jealous husband has three mouths, comte, get three cakes."

"Manicamp, I can get such advice as that from M. de Beautru."

"In order to get better advice," said Manicamp, with a comical seriousness of expression, "you will be obliged to adopt a more precise formula than you have used towards me."

"If Raoul were here," said De Guiche, "he would be sure to understand me."

"So I think, particularly if you said to him: 'I should very much like

to see Madame a little nearer, but I fear Monsieur, because he is jealous." "Manicamp!" cried the comte, angrily, and endeavouring to overwhelm his tormentor by a look, who did not, however, appear to be in the slightest degree disturbed by it.

"What is the matter now, my dear comte?" inquired Manicamp.

"What! is it thus that you blaspheme the most sacred of names?"

"What names?"

"Monsieur! Madame! the highest names in the kingdom."

"You are very strangely mistaken, my dear comte, I never mentioned the highest names in the kingdom. I merely answered you in reference to the subject of a jealous husband, whose name you did not tell me, and who, as a matter of course, has a wife. I therefore, I repeat, replied to you, in order to see Madame, you must get a little more intimate with Monsieur."

"Jester, that you are," said the comte, smiling; "was that what you said?"—"Nothing else."

"Very good; what then?"

"Now," added Manicamp, "let the question be regarding the Duchess — or the Duke —; very well, I shall say: Let us get into the house in some way or another; for that is a tactic which cannot in any case be unfavourable to your love affair."

"Ah! Manicamp, if you could find me a pretext, a good pretext."

"A pretext; I can find you a hundred, nay, a thousand. If Malicorne were here, he would have already hit upon fifty thousand excellent pretexts."

"Who is Malicorne?" replied De Guiche, half-shutting his eyes like a person reflecting, "I seem to know that name."

"Know him! I should think so; you owe his father thirty thousand crowns."

"Ah, indeed! so it's that worthy fellow from Orleans."

"Whom you promised an appointment in Monsieur's household; not the jealous husband, but the other."

"Well, then, since your friend Malicorne is such an inventive genius, let him find me a means of being adored by Monsieur, and a pretext to make my peace with him."

"Very good; I'll talk to him about it."

"But who is that coming?"—"The Vicomte de Bragelonne."

"Raoul! yes, it is he," said De Guiche, as he hastened forward to meet him. "You here, Raoul!" said De Guiche.

"Yes, I was looking for you to say farewell," replied Raoul, warmly pressing the comte's hands. "How do you do, Monsieur Manicamp?"

"How is this, vicomte; you are leaving us?"

"Yes, a mission from the king."—"Where are you going?"

"To London. On leaving you, I am going to Madame, she has a letter to give me for his majesty Charles II."

"You will find her alone, for Monsieur has gone out; gone to bathe, in fact."

"In that case, you, who are one of Monsieur's gentlemen in waiting, will undertake to make my excuses to him. I should have waited in order to receive any directions he might have to give me, if the desire for my immediate departure had not been intimated to me by M. Fouquet on behalf of his majesty."

Manicamp touched De Guiche's elbow, saying, "There's a pretext for you."

"What?"—"M. de Bragelonne's excuses."

"A weak pretext," said De Guiche.

"An excellent one, if Monsieur is not angry with you ; but a paltry one if he bears you ill-will."

"You are right, Manicamp ; a pretext, whatever it may be, is all I require. And so a pleasant journey to you, Raoul." And the two friends thereupon took a warm leave of each other. Five minutes afterwards Raoul entered Madame's apartments, as Mademoiselle de Montalais had begged him to do. Madame was still seated at the table where she had written her letter. Before her was still burning the rose-coloured taper which she had used to seal it. Only in her deep reflection, for Madame seemed to be buried in thought, she had forgotten to extinguish the taper. Bragelonne was expected, and was announced, therefore, as soon as he appeared. Bragelonne was a very model of elegance in every way ; it was impossible to see him once without always remembering him ; and, not only had Madame seen him once, but it will not be forgotten he was one of the very first who had gone to meet her, and had accompanied her from Havre to Paris. Madame had preserved, therefore, an excellent recollection of him.

"Ah ! M. de Bragelonne," she said to him, "you are going to see my brother, who will be delighted to pay to the son a portion of the debt of gratitude he has contracted with the father."

"The Comte de la Fère, madame, has been abundantly recompensed for the little service he had the happiness to render the king, by the kindness which the king manifested towards him, and it is I who will have to convey to his majesty the assurance of the respect, devotion, and gratitude of father and son."—"Do you know my brother?"

"No, your highness ; I shall have the honour of seeing his majesty for the first time."

"You require no recommendation to him. At all events, however, if you have any doubt about your personal merit, take me unhesitatingly for your surety."

"Your royal highness overwhelms me with your kindness."

"No ! M. de Bragelonne, I well remember that we were fellow-travellers once, and that I remarked your extreme prudence in the midst of the extravagant absurdities committed, on both sides, by two of the greatest simpletons in the world, M. de Guiche, and the Duke of Buckingham. Let us not speak of them, however, but of yourself. Are you going to England to remain there permanently ? Forgive my inquiry, but it is not curiosity, but a desire to be of service to you in anything that I can do."

"No, Madame ; I am going to England to fulfil a mission which his majesty has been kind enough to confide to me—nothing more."

"And you propose to return to France?"

"As soon as I shall have accomplished my mission ; unless, indeed, his majesty King Charles II. should have other orders for me."

"He will beg you, at the very least, I am sure, to remain near him as long as possible."

"In that case, as I shall not know how to refuse, I will now beforehand entreat your royal highness to have the goodness to remind the king of France that one of his devoted servants is far away from him."

"Take care that at the time you are recalled, you do not consider his command as an abuse of power."—"I do not understand you, madame."

"The court of France is not easily matched, I am aware ; but yet we have some pretty women at the court of England also." Raoul smiled.

"Oh!" said Madame, "yours is a smile which portends no good to my countrywomen. It is as though you were telling them, Monsieur de Bragelonne: 'I visit you, but I leave my heart on the other side of the Channel.' Did not your smile indicate that?"

"Your highness is gifted with the power of reading the inmost depths of the soul, and you will understand, therefore, why, at present, any prolonged residence at the court of England would be a matter of the deepest regret for me."

"And I need not inquire if so gallant a knight is recompensed in return?"

"I have been brought up, Madame, with her whom I love, and I believe that our affection is mutual."

"In that case, do not delay your departure, Monsieur de Bragelonne, and delay not your return, for on your return we shall see two persons happy; for I hope no obstacle exists to your felicity."

"There is a great obstacle, Madame."

"Indeed! what is it?"—"The king's wishes on the subject."

"The king opposes your marriage?"

"He postpones it at least. I solicited his majesty's consent through the Comte de la Fère, and without absolutely refusing it, he at least positively said it must be deferred."

"Is the young lady whom you love unworthy of you, then?"

"She is worthy of a king's affection, Madame."

"I mean, she is not, perhaps, of birth equal to your own."

"Her family is excellent."—"Is she young, beautiful?"

"She is seventeen, and, in my opinion, exceedingly beautiful."

"Is she in the country, or at Paris?"

"She is here, at Fontainebleau, Madame."

"At the court?"—"Yes."

"Do I know her?"

"She has the honour to form one of your highness's household."

"Her name?" inquired the princess, anxiously; "if, indeed," she added hastily, "her name is not a secret."

"No, Madame, my affection is too pure for me to make a secret of it to any one, and with still greater reason for your royal highness, whose kindness towards me has been so extreme. It is Mademoiselle Louise de la Vallière."

Madame could not restrain an exclamation, in which a feeling stronger than surprise might have been detected. "Ah!" she said, "La Vallière—she who yesterday—" she paused, and then continued, "she who was taken ill, I believe."

"Yes, Madame; it was only this morning that I heard of the accident which had befallen her."

"Did you see her before you came to me?"

"I had the honour of taking leave of her."

"And you say," resumed Madame, making a powerful effort over herself, "that the king has—deferred your marriage with this young girl."

"Yes, Madame, deferred it."

"Did he assign any reason for this postponement?"—"None."

"How long is it since the Comte de la Fère preferred his request to the king?"—"More than a month, Madame."

"It is very singular," said the princess, as something like a cloud passed across her eyes. "A month?" she repeated.—"About a month."

"You are right, vicomte," said the princess with a smile, in which De

Bragelonne might have remarked a kind of restraint, "my brother must not keep you too long in England ; set off at once, and in the first letter I write to England, I will claim you in the king's name." And Madame rose to place her letter in Bragelonne's hands. Raoul understood that his audience was at an end ; he took the letter, bowed lowly to the princess, and left the room.

"A month !" murmured the princess ; " could I have been blind, then to so great an extent, and could he have loved her for this last month ? And as Madame had nothing to do, she sat down to begin a letter to her brother, the postscript of which was a summons for Bragelonne to return.

The Comte de Guiche, as we have seen, had yielded to the pressing persuasions of Manicamp, and allowed himself to be led to the stables, where they desired their horses to be got ready for them ; then, by one of the side paths, a description of which has already been given, they advanced to meet Monsieur, who, having just finished bathing, was returning towards the *château*, wearing a woman's veil to protect his face from getting burnt by the sun, which was already very powerful. Monsieur was in one of those fits of good humour which inspired him sometimes with an admiration of his own good looks. As he was bathing he had been able to compare the whiteness of his body with that of his courtiers, and, thanks to the care which his royal highness took of himself, no one, not even the Chevalier de Lorraine, could bear the comparison. Monsieur, moreover, had been tolerably successful in swimming, and his muscles having been exercised by the healthy immersion in the cool water, he was in a light and cheerful state of mind and body. So that, at the sight of Guiche, who advanced to meet him at a hand gallop, mounted upon a magnificent white horse, the prince could not restrain an exclamation of delight.

"I think matters look well," said Manicamp, who fancied he could read this friendly disposition upon his royal highness's countenance.

"Good day, De Guiche, good day," exclaimed the prince.

"Long life to your royal highness !" replied De Guiche, encouraged by the tone of Philip's voice ; "health, joy, happiness, and prosperity to your highness."

"Welcome, De Guiche, come on my right side, but keep your horse in hand, for I wish to return at a walking pace, under the cool shade of these trees."

"As you please, monseigneur," said De Guiche, taking his place on the prince's right, as he had just been invited to do.

"Now, my dear De Guiche," said the prince, "give me a little news of that De Guiche whom I used to know formerly, and who used to pay attentions to my wife."

Guiche blushed to the very whites of his eyes, while Monsieur burst out laughing, as though he had made the wittiest remark in the world. The few privileged courtiers who surrounded Monsieur thought it their duty to follow his example, although they had not heard the remark, and a noisy burst of laughter immediately followed, beginning with the first courtier, passing on through the whole company, and only terminating with the last. De Guiche, although blushing extremely, put a good countenance on the matter : Manicamp looked at him.

"Ah ! monseigneur," replied De Guiche, "show a little charity towards such a miserable fellow as I am ; do not hold me up to the ridicule of the Chevalier de Lorraine."—"How do you mean?"

"If he hears you ridicule me, he will go beyond your highness, and will show no pity."—"About your passion and the princess, do you mean?"

"For mercy's sake, monseigneur."

"Come, come, De Guiche, confess that you did get a little sweet upon adame."—"I will never confess such a thing, monseigneur."

"Out of respect for me, I suppose; but I release you from your respect, De Guiche. Confess, as if it were simply a question about Mademoiselle de Chalais and Mademoiselle de la Vallière."

Then breaking off, he said, beginning to laugh again, "Come, that is very good—a remark like a sword which cuts two ways at once. I hit you and my brother at the same time, Chalais and La Vallière, your affianced bride and his future lady-love."

"Really, monseigneur," said the comte, "you are in a most brilliant humour to-day."

"The fact is, I feel well, and then I am pleased to see you again. But you were angry with me, were you not?"

"I, monseigneur? Why should I have been so?"

"Because I interfered with your sarabands and your other Spanish amusements. Nay, do not deny it. On that day you left the princess's apartments with your eyes full of fury; that brought you ill-luck, for you danced in the ballet yesterday in a most miserable manner. Now, don't get sulky, De Guiche, for it does you no good, but makes you look as surly as a bear. If the princess did look at you attentively yesterday, I am quite sure of one thing."

"What is that, monseigneur? Your highness alarms me."

"She has quite forsworn you now," said the prince, with a burst of loud laughter.

"Decidedly," thought Manicamp, "rank has nothing to do with it, and all men are alike."

The prince continued:—"At all events, you are now returned, and it is to be hoped that the chevalier will become amiable again."

"How so, monseigneur; and by what miracle can I exercise such an influence over M. de Lorraine?"

"The matter is very simple, he is jealous of you."

"Bah! it is not possible."—"It is the case, though."

"He does me too much honour, then."

"The fact is, that when you are here he is full of kindness and attention, but when you are gone he makes me suffer a perfect martyrdom. I am like a see-saw. Besides, you do not know the idea which has struck me?"

"I do not even suspect it."

"Well, then; when you were in exile, for you really were exiled my poor De Guiche——"

"I should think so, indeed; but whose fault was it?" said De Guiche retending to speak in an angry tone.

"Not mine, certainly, my dear comte," replied his royal highness, "upon my honour, I did not ask the king to exile you."

"No, not you, monseigneur, I am well aware; but——"

"But Madame; well, as far as that goes, I do not say it is not the case. Why, what the deuce did you do or say to Madame?"

"Really, monseigneur——"

"Women, I know, have their grudges, and my wife is not free from the caprices of that nature. But if she were the cause of your being exiled, I fear you no ill-will."

"In that case, monseigneur," said De Guiche, "I am not unhappy together."

Manicamp, who was following closely behind De Guiche, and who did

not lose a word of what the prince was saying, bent down to his very shoulders over his horse's neck, in order to conceal the laughter he could not repress.

"Besides, your exile started a project in my head."—"Good."

"When the chevalier—finding you were no longer here, and sure of reigning undisturbed—began to bully me, I, observing that my wife, in the most perfect contrast to him, was most kind and amiable towards me, who had neglected her so much, the idea occurred to me of becoming a model husband—a rarity, a curiosity, at the court; and I had an idea of getting very fond of my wife."

De Guiche looked at the prince with a stupefied expression of countenance, which was not assumed.

"Oh! monseigneur," De Guiche stammered out tremblingly; surely, that idea did not seriously occur to you."

"Indeed it did. I have some property that my brother gave me on my marriage; she has some money of her own, and not a little, either, for she gets money from her brother and brother-in-law of England and France at the same time. Well! we should have left the court. I should have retired to my château at Villers-Cotterets, situated in the middle of a forest, in which we should have led a most sentimental life in the very same spot where my grandfather, Henry IV., did with La Belle Gabrielle. What do you think of that idea De Guiche?"

"Why, it is enough to make one shudder, monseigneur," replied De Guiche, who shuddered in reality.

"Ah! I see you would never be able to endure being exiled a second time."—"I, monseigneur?"

"I will not carry you off with us, as I had at first intended."

"What, with you, monseigneur?"

"Yes; if the idea should occur to me again of taking a dislike to the court?"

"Oh! do not let that make any difference, monseigneur; I would follow your highness to the end of the world."

"Clumsy fellow, that you are!" said Manicamp, grumblingly, pushing his horse towards De Guiche, so as almost to unseat him, and then, as he passed close to him, as if he had lost his command over the horse, he whispered, "For goodness' sake, think what you are saying."

"Well, it is agreed, then," said the prince; "since you are so devoted to me, I shall take you with me."

"Anywhere, everywhere, monseigneur," replied De Guiche in a joyous tone, "whenever you like, and at once, too. Are you ready?"

And De Guiche, laughingly, gave his horse the rein, and galloped forward a few yards.

"One moment," said the prince. "Let us go to the château first."

"What for?"—"Why, to take my wife, of course."

"What for?" asked De Guiche.

"Why, since I tell you that it is a project of conjugal affection, it is necessary I should take my wife with me."

"In that case, monseigneur," replied the comte, "I am greatly concerned, but no De Guiche for you."—"Bah!"

"Yes.—Why do you take Madame with you?"

"Because I begin to see that I love her," said the prince.

De Guiche turned slightly pale, but endeavoured to preserve his seeming cheerfulness.

"If you love Madame, monseigneur," he said, "that ought to be quite enough for you, and you have no further need of your friends."

"Not bad, not bad," murmured Manicamp.

"There, your fear of Madame has begun again," replied the prince.

"Why, monseigneur, I have experienced that to my cost ; a woman was the cause of my being exiled."

"What a horrible disposition you have, De Guiche ; how terribly you are malice."—"I should like the case to be your own, monseigneur."

"Decidedly, then, that was the reason why you danced so badly yesterday ; you wished to revenge yourself, I suppose, by trying to make Madame make a mistake in her dancing ; ah ! that is very paltry, De Guiche, and I will tell Madame of it."

"You can tell her whatever you please, monseigneur, for her highness cannot hate me more than she does."

"Nonsense, you are exaggerating ; and this because merely of the fortnight's sojourn in the country she imposed on you."

"Monseigneur, a fortnight is a fortnight ; and when the time was passed getting sick and tired of everything, a fortnight is an eternity."

"So that you will not forgive her ?"—"Never !"

"Come, come, De Guiche, be a better disposed fellow than that. I wish to make your peace with her ; you will find, in conversing with her, that she has no malice or unkindness in her nature, and that she is very contented."—"Monseigneur—"

"You will see, that she can receive her friends like a princess, and though like a citizen's wife ; you will see that, when she pleases, she can make the hours pass away like minutes. Come, De Guiche, you must really make up your differences with my wife."

"Upon my word," said Manicamp to himself, "the prince is a husband, whose wife's name will bring him ill-luck, and King Candaules, of old, was a complete tiger beside his royal highness."

"At all events," added the prince, "I am sure you will make it up with my wife ; I guarantee you will do so. Only, I must show you the way now. There is nothing common-place about her, and it is not every one who takes her fancy."—"Monseigneur—"

"No resistance, De Guiche, or I shall get out of temper," replied the prince.

"Well, since he will have it so," murmured Manicamp, in Guiche's ear, "do as he wants you to do."

"Well, monseigneur," said the comte, "I obey."

"And to begin," resumed the prince, "there will be cards this evening, in Madame's apartment ; you will dine with me, and I will take you there with me."

"Oh ! as for that, monseigneur," objected De Guiche, "you will allow me to object."—"What, again ! this is positive rebellion."

"Madame received me too indifferently, yesterday, before the whole court."—"Really," said the prince, laughing.

"Nay, so much so, indeed, that she did not even answer me, when I addressed her ; it may be a good thing to have no self-respect at all, but to have too little is not enough, as the saying is."

"Comte ! after dinner you will go to your own apartments, and dress yourself, and then you will come to fetch me. I shall wait for you."

"Since your highness absolutely commands it."—"Positively."

"He'll not let go his hold," said Manicamp ; "these are the sort of things which husbands cling most obstinately to.—Ah ! what a pity M. Molière could not have heard this man, he would have turned him into verse if he had."

ance and his court, chatting in this manner, returned to the apartments of the château.

"By-the-bye," said De Guiche, as they were standing by the door, "I have a commission for your royal highness."

"Execute it, then."

"M. de Bragelonne has, by the king's order, set off for London, and he has charged me with his respects for you, monseigneur."

"A pleasant journey to the vicomte, whom I like very much. Go and dress yourself De Guiche, and come back for me. If you don't come back——"

"What will happen then, monseigneur?"

"I will get you sent to the Bastille."

"Well," said De Guiche, laughing, "his royal highness, monseigneur, is decidedly the counterpart of her royal highness, Madame. Madame gets me sent into exile, because she does not care for me sufficiently; and Monseigneur gets me imprisoned, because he cares for me too much. I thank Monseigneur, and I thank Madame."

"Come, come," said the prince, "you are a delightful companion, and you know that I cannot do without you. Return as soon as you can."

"Very well; but I am in the humour to prove myself difficult to be pleased in my turn, monseigneur."——"Bah!"

"So, I will not return to your royal highness, except upon one condition."

"Name it."——"I want to oblige the friend of one of my friends."

"What's his name?"

"Malicorne."——"An ugly name."

"But very well borne, monseigneur."——"That may be. Well!"

"Well, I owe M. Malicorne a place in your household, monseigneur."

"What kind of a place?"——"Any kind of place; a supervision of some sort or another, for instance."

"That happens very fortunately, for yesterday, I dismissed my chief usher of the apartments."

"That will do admirably. What are his duties?"

"Nothing, except to look about and make his report."

"A sort of interior police?"——"Exactly."

"Ah, how excellently that will suit Malicorne," Manicamp ventured to say.

"You know the person we are speaking of, M. Manicamp?" inquired the prince.

"Intimately, monseigneur. I am the friend in question."

"And your opinion is?"

"That your highness could never get such an usher of the apartments as he will make."

"How much does the appointment bring in?" inquired the comte of the prince.

"I don't know at all, only I have always been told that he could make as much as he pleased when he was thoroughly employed."

"What do you call being thoroughly occupied, prince?"

"It means, of course, when the functionary in question is a man with his wits about him."

"In that case I think your highness will be content, for Malicorne is as sharp as the devil himself."

"Good! the appointment will be an expensive one for me, in that case," replied the prince, laughing. "You are making me a positive present, comte."——"I believe so, monseigneur."

Well, go and announce to your M. Mélicorne——”

“Malicorne, monseigneur.”

“I shall never get hold of that name.”

“You say Manicamp very well, monseigneur.”

“Oh, I ought to say Malicorne very well, too. Custom will help me.”

“Say what you like, monseigneur, I can promise you that your inspector apartments will not be annoyed; he is the very happiest disposition that can be met with.”

“Well, then, my dear De Guiche, inform him of his nomination. But, y——”

“What is it, monseigneur?”

“I wish to see him beforehand; if he be as ugly as his name, I retract what I have said.”

“Your highness knows him, for you have already seen him at the Palais-Royal; nay, indeed, it was I who presented him to you.”

“Ah, I remember now—not a bad-looking fellow.”

“I knew you must have noticed him, monseigneur.”

“Yes, yes, yes. You see, De Guiche, I do not wish that either my wife or myself should have ugly faces before our eyes. My wife will have her maids of honour pretty; I, all the gentlemen about me good-looking. In this way, De Guiche, you see, that any children we may have will have a good chance of being pretty, if my wife and myself have handsome models before us.”

“Most powerfully argued, monseigneur,” said Manicamp, showing his approval by look and voice at the same time.

As for De Guiche, he very probably did not find the argument so convincing, for he merely signified his opinion by a gesture, which, moreover, prohibited in a marked manner great indecision of mind on the subject. Manicamp went off to inform Malicorne of the good news he had just learnt. De Guiche seemed very unwilling to take his departure for the purpose of dressing himself. Monsieur, singing, laughing, and admiring himself, passed away the time until the dinner-hour, in a frame of mind which would have justified the proverb of “Happy as a prince.”

## CHAPTER CXXXI.

### STORY OF A DRYAD AND OF A NAIAD.

EVERY one had partaken of the banquet at the château, and had afterwards assumed their full court dresses. The usual hour for the repast was five o'clock. If we say, then, that the repast occupied an hour and the toilette two hours, everybody was ready about eight o'clock in the evening. Towards eight o'clock, therefore, the guests began to arrive at Madame's, for we have already intimated it was Madame who “received” that evening. And at Madame's *soirées* no one failed to be present; for the evenings passed in her apartments had always that perfect charm about them which the queen, that pious and excellent princess, had not been able to confer upon her *réunions*. For, unfortunately, one of the advantages of goodness of disposition, is, that it is far less amusing than wit of an ill-natured character. And yet, let us hasten to add, that such a style of wit could not be applied to Madame, for her disposition of mind, naturally of the very highest order, comprised too much true generosity, so many noble impulses and high-souled thoughts, to warrant her wit being termed ill-natured. But Madame was endowed with a spirit of

resistance—a gift very frequently fatal to its possessor, for it breaks where another would have bent ; the result was that blows did not become deadened upon her as upon what might be termed the wadded feelings of Maria-Theresa. Her heart rebounded at each attack, and, therefore, whenever she was attacked, even in a manner almost to stun her, she returned blow for blow to any one who might be imprudent enough to venture to tilt against her. Was this really maliciousness of disposition or simply waywardness of character? We regard those rich and powerful natures as like the tree of knowledge, producing good and evil at the same time ; a double branch, always blooming and fruitful, of which those who wish to eat know how to detect the good fruit, and from which the worthless and frivolous die who have eaten of it—a circumstance which is by no means to be regarded as a great misfortune. Madame, therefore, who had a well-digested plan in her mind of constituting herself the second, if not even the principal, queen of the court, rendered her receptions delightful to all, from the conversation, the opportunities of meeting, and the perfect liberty which she allowed to every one of making any remark he pleased, on the condition, however, that the remark was amusing or sensible. And it will hardly be believed that, by that means, there was less talking among the society Madame assembled together than elsewhere. Madame hated people who talked much, and took a very cruel revenge upon them, for she allowed them to talk. She disliked pretension, too, and never overlooked that defect, even in the king himself. It was more than a weakness of Monsieur, and the princess had undertaken the amazing task of curing him of it. As for the rest, poets, wits, beautiful women, all were received by her with the air of a mistress superior to her slaves. Sufficiently meditative in her liveliest humours to make even poets meditate ; sufficiently pretty to dazzle by her attractions, even among the prettiest ; sufficiently witty for the most distinguished persons who were present to listen to her with pleasure—it will easily be believed that the *réunions* which were held in Madame's apartments must naturally have proved very attractive. All who were young flocked there ; and when the king himself happens to be young, everybody at court is so too. And so the older ladies of the court, the strong-minded women of the regency, or of the last reign, pouted and sulked at their ease ; but others only laughed at the fits of sulkiness in which these venerable individuals indulged, who had carried the love of authority so far as even to have taken the command of bodies of soldiers in the war of the Fronde, in order, as Madame asserted, not to lose their influence over men altogether. As eight o'clock struck, her royal highness entered the great drawing-room, accompanied by her ladies in attendance, and found several gentlemen belonging to the court already there, having been waiting for some minutes. Among those who had arrived before the hour fixed for the reception she looked around for the one who, she thought, ought to have been the first in attendance, but he was not there. However, almost at the very moment she had completed her investigation, Monsieur was announced. Monsieur looked splendid. All the precious stones and jewels of Cardinal Mazarin—those, of course, which that minister could not do otherwise than leave ; all the queen-mother's jewels, as well as a few others belonging to his wife—Monsieur wore them all, and he was as dazzling as the sun. Behind him followed De Guiche, with hesitating steps, and with an air of contrition admirably assumed. De Guiche wore a costume of French-grey velvet, embroidered with silver, and trimmed with blue ribbons ; he wore, also, Mechlin lace, as rare and beautiful of its sort as were the jewels of Monsieur of theirs. The plume



“MONSIEUR WORE THEM ALL, AND HE WAS AS DAZZLING AS THE SUN.”

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n his hat was red. Madame, too, wore several colours, and preferred red for hangings, grey for dresses, and blue for flowers. M. de Guiche, dressed as we have described, looked so handsome that he excited every one's observation. An interesting pallor of complexion, a languid expression of the eyes, his white hands seen through the masses of lace which covered them, the melancholy expression of his mouth—it was only necessary, indeed, to see M. de Guiche to admit that few men at the court of France could equal him. The consequence was that Monsieur, who was pretentious enough to fancy he could eclipse a star even, if a star had adorned itself in a similar manner to himself, was, on the contrary, completely eclipsed in all imaginations, which are very silent judges certainly, but very positive and high in their judgment. Madame had looked at De Guiche slightly, but, slight as her look had been, it had brought a delightful colour to his face. In fact, Madame had found De Guiche so handsome and so admirably dressed, that she almost ceased regretting the royal conquest which she felt was on the point of escaping her. Her heart, therefore, sent the blood to her face. Monsieur approached her. He had not noticed the princess blush, or if he had seen it he was far from attributing it to its true cause.

"Madame," he said, kissing his wife's hand, "there is some one present here who has fallen into disgrace—an unhappy exile, whom I would venture to recommend to your kindness. Do not forget, I beg, that he is one of my best friends, and that your kind reception of him will please me greatly."

"What exile—what disgraced person are you speaking of?" inquired Madame, looking all round, and not permitting her glance to rest more on the count than on the others.

This was the moment to present De Guiche, and the prince drew aside and let De Guiche pass him, who, with a tolerably well-assumed awkwardness of manner, approached Madame and made his reverence to her.

"What!" exclaimed Madame, as if she were greatly surprised, "is M. de Guiche the disgraced individual you speak of—the exile in question?"

"Yes, certainly," returned the duke.

"Indeed," said Madame, "he is almost the only person we see here."

"You are unjust, Madame," said the prince.

"I?"—"Certainly. Come, forgive the poor fellow."

"Forgive him what? What have I to forgive M. de Guiche?"

"Come, explain yourself, De Guiche. What do you wish to be forgiven?" inquired the prince.

"Alas! her royal highness knows very well what it is," replied the latter, in a hypocritical tone.

"Come, come, give him your hand, Madame," said Philip.

"If it will give you any pleasure, Monsieur;" and, with a movement of her eyes and shoulders, which it would be impossible to describe, Madame extended towards the young man her beautiful and perfumed hand, upon which he pressed his lips. It was evident that he did so for some little time, and that Madame did not withdraw her hand too quickly, for the duke added:

"De Guiche is not wickedly disposed, Madame; so do not be afraid—he will not bite you."

A pretext was given in the gallery by the duke's remark, which was not perhaps very laughable, for every one to laugh excessively. The situation was odd enough, and some kindly disposed persons had observed it. Monsieur was still enjoying the effect of his remark, when the king was

announced. The appearance of the room at this moment was as follows : in the centre, before the fireplace, which was filled with flowers, Madame was standing up, with her maids of honour, formed in two wings, on either side of her, and around whom the butterflies of the court were fluttering. Several other groups were formed in the recesses of the windows, like soldiers stationed in their different towers who belong to the same garrison. From their respective places they could pick up the remarks which fell from the principal group. From one of these groups, the nearest to the fire-place, Malicorne, who had been at once raised to the dignity, through Manicamp and De Guiche, of the post of master of the apartments, and whose official costume had been ready for the last two months, was brilliant with gold lace, and shone upon Montalais, standing on Madame's extreme left, with all the fire of his eyes and all the splendour of his velvet. Madame was conversing with Mademoiselle de Chatillon and Mademoiselle de Crégny, who were next to her, and addressed a few words to Monsieur, who drew aside as soon as the king was announced. Mademoiselle de la Vallière, like Montalais, was on Madame's left hand, and the last but one on the line, Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente being on her right. She was stationed as certain bodies of troops are, whose weakness is suspected, and who are placed between two experienced regiments. Guarded in this manner by her two companions who had shared her adventure, La Vallière, whether from regret at Raoul's departure, or still suffering from the emotion caused by recent events, which had begun to render her name familiar on the lips of the courtiers, La Vallière, we repeat, hid her eyes, red with weeping, behind her fan, and seemed to give the greatest attention to the remarks which Montalais and Athenais, alternately, whispered to her from time to time. As soon as the king's name was announced a general movement took place in the apartment. Madame, in her character as hostess, rose to receive the royal visitor ; but as she rose, notwithstanding her pre-occupation of mind, she glanced hastily towards her right ; her glance, which the presumptuous De Guiche regarded as intended for himself, rested, as it swept over the whole circle, upon La Vallière, whose warm blush and restless emotion it immediately perceived.

The king advanced to the middle of the group, which had now become a general one, by a movement which took place from the circumference to the centre. Every head bowed low before his majesty, the ladies bending like frail and magnificent lilies before the king Aquilio. There was nothing very severe, we will even say, nothing very royal, that evening about the king, except, however, his youth and good looks. He wore an air of animated joyousness and good humour which set all imaginations at work, and, thereupon, all present promised themselves a delightful evening, for no other reason than from having remarked the desire which his majesty had to amuse himself in Madame's apartments. If there was any one in particular whose high spirits and good humour could equal the king's, it was M. de Saint-Aignan, who was dressed in a rose-coloured costume, with face and ribbons of the same colour, and, in addition, particularly rose-coloured in his ideas, for that evening M. de Saint-Aignan was prolific in ideas. The circumstance which had given a new expansion to the numerous ideas germinating in his fertile brain was, that he had just perceived that Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente was, like himself, dressed in rose-colour. We would not wish to say, however, that the wily courtier had not known beforehand that the beautiful Athenais was to wear that particular colour ; for he very well knew the art of unlocking the

of a dressmaker or ladies'-maid as to her mistress's intentions. He cast as many assassinating glances at Mademoiselle Athenais as he had bows of ribbon on his stockings and his doublet ; in other words, he discharged an immense number. The king having paid Madame the customary compliments, and Madame having requested him to be seated, the circle was immediately formed. Louis inquired of Monsieur the particulars of the day's bathing ; and stated, looking at the ladies present while he spoke, that certain poets were engaged turning into verse the enchanting diversion of the baths of Valvins, and that one of them particularly, M. Loret, seemed to have been entrusted with the confidence of some water-nymph, as he had in his verses recounted many circumstances that were actually true—at which remark more than one lady present felt herself bound to blush. The king at this moment took the opportunity of looking round him more leisurely ; Montalais was the only one who did not blush sufficiently to prevent her looking at the king, and she saw him fix his eyes most devouringly upon Mademoiselle de la Vallière. This undaunted maid of honour, Mademoiselle de Montalais, be it understood, forced the king to lower his gaze, and so saved Louise de la Vallière from a sympathetic warmth of feeling which this gaze might possibly have conveyed. Louis was appropriated by Madame, who overwhelmed him with inquiries, and no one in the world knew how to ask questions better than he did. He tried, however, to render the conversation general, and, with the view of effecting this, he redoubled his attention and devotion to her. Madame coveted complimentary remarks, and determined to procure them at any cost, she addressed herself to the king, saying :

“Sire, your majesty, who is aware of everything which occurs in your kingdom, ought to know beforehand the verses confided to M. Loret by his nymph : will your majesty kindly communicate them to us ?”

“Madame,” replied the king, with perfect grace of manner, “I dare not—you, personally, might be in no little degree confused at having to listen to certain details—but Saint-Aignan tells a story well, and has a perfect recollection of the verses ; if he does not remember them, he will invent. I can certify him to be almost a poet himself.” Saint-Aignan, thus brought prominently forward, was compelled to introduce himself as advantageously as possible. Unfortunately, however, for Madame, he thought of the own personal affairs only ; in other words, instead of paying Madame the compliments she so much desired and relished, his mind was fixed upon making as much display as possible of his own good fortune. Again glancing, therefore, for the hundredth time, at the beautiful Athenais, who thoroughly carried into practice her previous evening's theory of not even deigning to look at her adorer, he said :

“Your majesty will perhaps pardon me for having too indifferently remembered the verses which the nymph dictated to Loret ; but, if the king has not retained any recollection of them, what could I possibly remember ?”

Madame did not receive this shortcoming of the courtier very favourably.

“Ah ! madame,” added Saint-Aignan, “at present it is no longer a question what the water-nymphs have to say ; and one would almost be tempted to believe that nothing of any interest now occurs in those liquid realms. It is upon the earth, madame, where important events happen. Ah ! madame, upon the earth how many tales are there full of——”

“Well,” said Madame, “and what is taking place upon the earth ?”

“That question must be asked of the Dryads,” replied the comte ; “the Dryads inhabit the forests, as your royal highness is aware.”

"I am aware, also, that they are naturally very talkative, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan."

"Such is the case, madame; but when they say such delightful things, it would be ungracious to accuse them of being too talkative."

"Do they talk so delightfully, then?" inquired the princess, indifferently. "Really, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan, you excite my curiosity; and, if I were the king, I would require you immediately to tell us what the delightful things are which these Dryads have been saying, since you alone seem to understand their language."

"I am perfectly at his majesty's orders, madame, in that respect," replied the comte, quickly.

"What a fortunate fellow this Saint-Aignan is, to understand the language of the Dryads!" said Monsieur.

"I understand it perfectly, monseigneur, as I do my own language."

"Tell us all about them, then," said Madame.

The king felt embarrassed; for his confidant was, in all probability, about to embark in a difficult matter. He felt that it would be so, from the general attention excited by Saint-Aignan's preamble, and aroused too by Madame's peculiar manner. The most reserved of those who were present seemed ready to devour every syllable the comte was about to pronounce. They coughed, drew closer together, looked curiously at some of the maids of honour, who, in order to support with greater propriety, or with more steadiness, the fixity of the inquisitorial looks bent upon them, adjusted their fans accordingly, and assumed the bearing of a duellist who is about to be exposed to his adversary's fire. At this epoch, the fashion of ingeniously constructed conversations, and hazardously dangerous recitals, so prevailed, that, where, in modern times, a whole company assembled in a drawing-room would begin to suspect some scandal, or disclosure, or tragic event, and would hurry away in dismay, Madame's guests quietly settled themselves in their places, in order not to lose a word or gesture of the comedy composed by Monsieur de Saint-Aignan for their benefit, and the termination of which, whatever the style and the plot might be, must, as a matter of course, be marked by the most perfect propriety. The comte was known as a man of extreme refinement, and an admirable narrator. He courageously began, then, amidst a profound silence, which would have been formidable for any one but himself:—"Madame, by the king's permission, I address myself, in the first place, to your royal highness, since you admit yourself to be the person present possessing the greatest curiosity. I have the honour therefore, to inform your royal highness that the Dryad more particularly inhabits the hollows of oaks; and, as Dryads are mythological creatures of great beauty, they inhabit the most beautiful trees, in other words, the largest to be found."

At this exordium, which recalled, under a transparent veil, the celebrated story of the royal oak, which had played so important a part in the last evening, so many hearts began to beat, both from joy and uneasiness, that, if Saint-Aignan had not had a good and sonorous voice, their throbbings might have been heard above the sound of his voice.

"There must surely be Dryads at Fontainebleau, then," said Madame, in a perfectly calm voice; "for I have never, in all my life, seen finer oaks than in the royal park." And as she spoke, she directed towards De Guiche a look of which he had no reason to complain, as he had of the one that preceded it; and which, as we have already mentioned, had reserved a certain amount of indefiniteness most painful for so loving a heart as his.

"Precisely, madame, it is of Fontainebleau that I was about to speak to your royal highness," said Saint-Aignan ; "for the Dryad whose story is engaging our attention lives in the park belonging to the château of his majesty." The affair was fairly embarked on ; the action was begun, and it was no longer possible for auditory or narrator to draw back.

"It will be worth listening to," said Madame ; "for the story not only appears to me to have all the interest of a national incident, but still more, seems to be a circumstance of very recent occurrence."

"I ought to begin by the beginning," said the comte. "In the first place, then, there lived at Fontainebleau, in a cottage of modest and unassuming appearance, two shepherds. The one was the shepherd Tyrcis, the owner of extensive domains transmitted to him from his parents, by right of inheritance. Tyrcis was young and handsome, and, from his many qualifications, he might be pronounced to be the first and foremost among the shepherds in the whole country ; one might even boldly say he was the king of them." A subdued murmur of approbation encouraged the narrator, who continued :—"His strength equals his courage ; no one displays greater address in hunting wild beasts, nor greater wisdom in matters where judgment is required. Whenever he mounts and exercises his horse in the beautiful plains of his inheritance, or whenever he joins with the shepherds who owe him allegiance, in different games of skill and strength, one might say that it is the god Mars darting his lance in the plains of Thrace, or, even better, that it was Apollo himself, the god of day, radiant upon earth, bearing his flaming darts in his hand." Every one understood that this allegorical portrait of the king was not the worst exordium that the narrator could have chosen ; and it consequently did not fail to produce its effect, either upon those who, from duty or inclination, applauded it to the very echo, or upon the king himself, to whom flattery was very agreeable when delicately conveyed, and whom, indeed, it did not always displease, even when it was a little too broad. Saint-Aignan then continued :—"It is not in games of glory only, ladies, that the shepherd Tyrcis had acquired that reputation by which he was regarded as the king of shepherds."

"Of the shepherds of Fontainebleau," said the king, smilingly, to Madame.

"Oh !" exclaimed Madame, "Fontainebleau is selected arbitrarily by the poet ; but I should say, of the shepherds of the whole world." The king forgot his part of a passive auditor, and bowed.

"It was," pursued Saint-Aignan, amidst a flattering murmur of applause, "it was with ladies fair especially that the qualities of this king of the shepherds were most prominently displayed. He was a shepherd with a mind as refined as his heart was pure ; he can pay a compliment with a charm of manner whose fascination it is impossible to resist ; and in his attachments he is so discreet, that his beautiful and happy conquests may regard their lot as more than enviable. Never a syllable of disclosure, never a moment's forgetfulness. Whoever has seen and heard Tyrcis must love him ; whoever loves and is beloved by him, has indeed found happiness." Saint-Aignan here paused ; he was enjoying the pleasures of his own compliments ; and the portrait he had drawn, however grotesquely inflated it might be, had found favour in certain ears, for whom the perfections of the shepherd did not seem to have been exaggerated. Madame begged the orator to continue. "Tyrcis," said the comte, "had a faithful companion, or rather a devoted servant, whose name was—Amyntas."

"Ah !" said Madame, archly, "now for the portrait of Amyntas ; you are such an excellent painter, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan."

"Madame——"

"Oh ! comte, do not, I entreat you, sacrifice poor Amyntas ; I should never forgive you."

"Madame, Amyntas is of too humble a position, particularly beside Tyrcis, for his person to be honoured by a parallel. There are certain friends who resemble those followers of ancient times, who caused themselves to be buried alive at their masters' feet. Amyntas's place, too, is at the feet of Tyrcis ; he cares for no other ; and if, sometimes, the illustrious hero——"

"Illustrious shepherd, do you mean?" said Madame, pretending to correct M. de Saint-Aignan.

"Your royal highness is right ; I was mistaken," returned the courtier ; "if, I say, the shepherd Tyrcis deigns occasionally to call Amyntas his friend, and to open his heart to him, it is an unparalleled favour, which the latter regards as the most unbounded felicity."

"All that you say," interrupted Madame, "establishes the extreme devotion of Amyntas to Tyrcis, but does not furnish us with the portrait of Amyntas. Comte, do not flatter him, if you like ; but describe him to us. I will have Amyntas's portrait." Saint-Aignan obeyed, after having bowed profoundly towards his majesty's sister-in-law.

"Amyntas," he said, "is somewhat older than Tyrcis ; he is not an ill-favoured shepherd ; it is even said that the muses condescended to smile upon him at his birth, even as Hebe smiled upon youth. He is not ambitious of display, but he is ambitious of being loved ; and he might not, perhaps, be found unworthy of it, if he were only sufficiently well known."

This latter paragraph, strengthened by a very killing glance, was directed straight to Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, who received them both unmoved. But the modesty and tact of the allusion had produced a good effect ; Amyntas reaped the benefit of it in the applause bestowed on him : Tyrcis's head had even given the signal for it by a consenting bow, full of good feeling.

"One evening," continued Saint-Aignan, "Tyrcis and Amyntas were walking together in the forest, talking of their love disappointments. Do not forget, ladies, that the story of the Dryad is now beginning, otherwise it would be easy to tell you what Tyrcis and Amyntas, the two most discreet shepherds of the whole earth, were talking about. They reached the thickest part of the forest, for the purpose of being quite alone, and of confiding their troubles more freely to each other, when suddenly the sound of voices struck upon their ears."

"Ah, ah !" said those who surrounded the narrator. "Nothing can be more interesting than this."

At this point, Madame, like a vigilant general inspecting his army, glanced at Montalais and Tonnay-Charente, who could not help wincing at it as they drew themselves up.

"These harmonious voices," resumed Saint-Aignan, "were those of certain shepherdesses, who had been likewise desirous of enjoying the coolness of the shade, and who, knowing the isolated and almost unapproachable situation of the place, had betaken themselves there to interchange their ideas upon——" A loud burst of laughter occasioned by this remark of Saint-Aignan, and an imperceptible smile of the king, as he looked at Tonnay-Charente, followed this sally.

"The Dryad affirms positively," continued Saint-Aignan, "that the shepherdesses were three in number, and that all three were young and beautiful."

"What were their names?" said Madame quietly.

"Their names!" said Saint-Aignan, who hesitated from the fear or committing an indiscretion.

"Of course; you called your shepherds Tyrcis and Amyntas, give your shepherdesses names in a similar manner."

"Oh! Madame, I am not an inventor; I relate simply what took place as the Dryad related it to me."

"What did your Dryad, then, call these shepherdesses? You have a very treacherous memory, I fear. This Dryad must have fallen out with the goddess Mnemosyne."

"These shepherdesses, Madame. Pray remember that it is a crime to betray a woman's name."

"From which a woman absolves you, comte, on condition that you will reveal the names of the shepherdesses."

"Their names were Phillis, Amaryllis, and Galatea."

"Very well; they have not lost by the delay," said Madame, "and now we have three charming names. But now for their portraits."

Saint-Aignan again made a slight movement.

"Nay, comte, let us proceed in due order," returned Madame. "Ought we not, sire, to have the portraits of the shepherdesses?"

The king, who expected this determined perseverance, and who began to feel some uneasiness, did not think it safe to provoke so dangerous an interrogator. He thought, too, that Saint-Aignan, in drawing the portraits, would find a means of insinuating some flattering allusions, which would be agreeable to the ears of one whom his majesty was interested in pleasing. It was with this hope and with this fear that Louis authorised Saint-Aignan to sketch the portraits of the shepherdesses, Phillis, Amaryllis, and Galatea.

"Very well, then, be it so," said Saint-Aignan, like a man who has made up his mind, and he began.

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## CHAPTER CXXXII.

### CONCLUSION OF THE STORY OF A NAIAD AND OF A DRYAD.

"PHILLIS," said Saint-Aignan, with a glance of defiance at Montalais, just as a fencing-master would give who invites an antagonist worthy of him to place himself on his guard, "Phillis is neither fair nor dark, neither tall nor short, neither too grave nor too gay; though but a shepherdess, she is as witty as a princess, and as coquettish as the most finished coquette that ever lived. Nothing can equal her excellent vision. Her heart yearns for everything her gaze embraces. She is like a bird, which always warbling, at one moment skims along the ground, at the next rises fluttering, in pursuit of a butterfly, then rests itself upon the topmost branch of a tree, where it defies the bird-catchers either to come and seize it, or to entrap it in their nets." The portrait bore such a strong resemblance to Montalais, that all eyes were directed towards her; she, however, with her head raised, and with a steady unmoved look, listened to Saint-Aignan, as if he were speaking of some one who was a complete stranger to her.

"Is that all, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan?" inquired the princess.

"Oh! your royal highness, the portrait is a mere sketch, and many more additions could be made, but I fear wearying your royal highness's patience, or offending the modesty of the shepherdess, and I shall therefore pass on to her companion, Amaryllis."

"Very well," said Madame, "pass on to Amaryllis, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan, we are all attention."

"Amaryllis is the eldest of the three, and yet," Saint-Aignan hastened to add, "this advanced age does not reach twenty years."

Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, who had slightly knitted her brows at the commencement of the description, unbent them with a smile.

"She is tall, with an immense quantity of hair, which she fastens in the manner of the Grecian statues ; her walk is full of majesty, her attitude haughty ; she has the air, therefore, rather of a goddess than of a mere mortal, and, among the goddesses, she most resembles Diana the huntress ; with this sole difference, however, that the cruel shepherdess, having stolen the quiver of young love, while poor Cupid was sleeping in a thicket of roses, instead of directing her arrows against the inhabitants of the forest, discharges them most pitilessly against all the poor shepherds who pass within reach of her bow and of her eyes."

"Oh ! what a wicked shepherdess !" said Madame. "She may some day wound herself with one of those arrows she discharges, as you say, so mercilessly on all sides."

"It is the hope of all the shepherds in general," said Saint-Aignan.

"And that of the shepherd Amyntas in particular, I suppose ?" said Madame.

"The shepherd Amyntas is so timid," said Saint-Aignan, with the most modest air he could assume, "that if he cherishes such a hope as that, no one has ever known anything about it, for he conceals it in the very depths of his heart." A flattering murmur of applause greeted the narrator's profession of faith on the part of the shepherd.

"And Galatea ?" inquired Madame. "I am impatient to see a hand so skilful as yours continue the portrait where Virgil left it, and finish it before our eyes."

"Madame," said Saint-Aignan, "I am indeed but a very poor poet beside the great Virgil. Still, encouraged by your desire, I will do my best."

Saint-Aignan extended his foot and his hand, and thus began :—"White as milk, she casts upon the breeze the perfume of her fair hair tinged with golden hues, as are the ears of corn. One is tempted to inquire if she is not the beautiful Europa, who inspired Jupiter with a tender passion as she played with her companions in the flower bespangled meadows. From her beautiful eyes, blue as the azure heavens in the brightest summer day, emanates a tender light, which reverie nurtures, and which love dispenses. When she frowns, or bends her looks towards the ground, the sun is veiled in token of mourning. When she smiles, on the contrary, nature resumes her joyousness, and the birds, which had for a moment been silenced, recommence their songs amid the leafy covert of the trees. Galatea," said Saint-Aignan, in conclusion, "is worthy of the admiration of the whole world ; and if she should ever bestow her heart upon another, happy will that man be to whom she consecrates her first affections."

Madame, who had attentively listened to the portrait Saint-Aignan had drawn, as indeed, had all the others too, contented herself by marking her approbation of the most poetic passages by occasional inclinations of her head ; but it was impossible to say if these marks of assent had been accorded to the ability of the narrator or to the resemblance of the portrait. The consequence, therefore, was, that as Madame did not openly exhibit any approbation, no one felt authorised to applaud, not even Monsieur, who secretly thought that Saint-Aignan dwelt too much upon the portraits of the shepherdesses, and had somewhat slightly passed over the por-

raits of the shepherds. The whole assembly seemed suddenly chilled. Saint-Aignan who had exhausted his rhetorical skill and his artist's brush in sketching the portrait of Galatea, and who, after the favour with which his other descriptions had been received, already imagined he could hear the loud applause for this last one, was himself more disappointed than the king and the rest of the company. A moment's silence followed, which was at last broken by Madame.

"Well, sire," she inquired, "what is your majesty's opinion of these three portraits?"

The king, who wished to relieve Saint-Aignan's embarrassment without compromising himself, replied, "Why, Amaryllis, in my opinion, is beautiful."

"For my part," said Monsieur, "I prefer Phillis; she is a capital girl, or rather a good-sort-of-fellow of a nymph."

A gentle laugh followed, and this time the looks were so direct, that Montalais felt herself blushing almost scarlet.

"Well," resumed Madame, "what were those shepherdesses saying to each other?"

Saint-Aignan, however, whose vanity had been wounded, did not feel himself in a position to sustain an attack of new and refreshed troops, and merely said, "Madame, the shepherdesses were confiding to one another their little preferences."

"Nay, nay! Monsieur de Saint-Aignan, you are a perfect stream of pastoral poesy," said Madame, with an amiable smile, which somewhat comforted the narrator.

"They confessed that love is a great peril, but that the absence of love is the heart's sentence of death."

"What was the conclusion they came to?" inquired Madame.

"They came to the conclusion that love was necessary."

"Very good! Did they lay down any conditions?"

"That of choice, simply," said Saint-Aignan. "I ought even to add—remember it is the Dryad who is speaking—that one of the shepherdesses, Amaryllis, I believe, was completely opposed to the necessity of loving, and yet she did not positively deny that she had allowed the image of a certain shepherd to take refuge in her heart."

"Was it Amyntas or Tyrcis?"

"Amyntas, Madame," said Saint-Aignan, modestly. "But Galatea, the gentle and soft-eyed Galatea, immediately replied, that neither Amyntas nor Alpheusibœus, nor Tityrus, nor indeed any of the handsomest shepherds of the country, were to be compared to Tyrcis; that Tyrcis, was as superior to all other men, as the oak to all other trees, as the lily in its majesty to all other flowers. She drew even such a portrait of Tyrcis that Tyrcis himself, who was listening, must have felt truly flattered at it, notwithstanding his rank and position. Thus Tyrcis and Amyntas had been distinguished by Phillis and Galatea; and thus had the secrets of two hearts been revealed beneath the shades of evening, and amid the recesses of the woods. Such, Madame, is what the Dryad related to me; she who knows all that takes place in the hollows of oaks and in grassy dells; she who knows the loves of the birds, and all they wish to convey by their songs; she who understands, in fact, the language of the wind among the branches, the humming of the insects with their golden and emerald wings in the corolla of the wild flowers; it was she who related the particulars to me, and I have repeated them."

"And now you have finished, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan, have you not?" said Madame, with a smile which made the king tremble.

"Quite finished," replied Saint-Aignan, "and only but too happy if I have been able to amuse your royal highness for a few moments."

"Moments which have been too brief," replied the princess, "for you have related most admirably all you know; but my dear Monsieur de Saint-Aignan, you have been unfortunate enough to obtain your information from one Dryad only, I believe?"

"Yes, Madame, only from one, I confess."

"The fact was, that you passed by a little Naiad, who pretended to know nothing at all, and yet knew a great deal more than your Dryad, my dear comte."

"A Naiad!" repeated several voices, who began to suspect that the story had a continuation.

"Of course; close beside the oak you are speaking of, which, if I am not mistaken, is called the royal oak—is it not so, Monsieur de Saint-Aignan?" Saint-Aignan and the king exchanged glances.

"Yes, Madame," the former replied.

"Well, close beside the oak there is a pretty little spring, which runs murmuring on over the pebbles, amidst the forget-me-nots and daisies."

"I believe you are correct," said the king, with some uneasiness, and listening with some anxiety to his sister-in-law's narrative.

"Oh! there is one, I can assure you," said Madame; "and the proof of it is, that the Naiad who resides in that little stream, stopped me as I was about to cross."—"Bah!" said Saint-Aignan.

"Yes, indeed," continued the princess, "and she did so in order to communicate to me many particulars which Monsieur de Saint-Aignan omitted in his recital."

"Pray relate them yourself," said Monsieur, "you can relate stories in such a charming manner." The princess bowed at the conjugal compliment paid her.

"I do not possess the poetical powers of the comte, nor his ability to bring out all the details."

"You will not be listened to with less interest on that account," said the king, who already perceived that something hostile was intended in his sister-in-law's story.

"I speak, too," continued Madame, "in the name of that poor little Naiad, who is indeed the most charming creature I ever met. Moreover, she laughed so heartily while she was telling me her story, that, in pursuance of that medical axiom that laughter is contagious, I ask permission to laugh a little myself when I recollect her words."

The king and Saint-Aignan, who noticed spreading over many of the faces present a commencement of the laughter which Madame announced, finished by looking at each other, as if asking themselves whether there was not some little conspiracy concealed beneath her words. But Madame was determined to turn the knife in the wound over and over again; she therefore resumed with an air of the most perfect innocence, in other words, with the most dangerous of all her airs:—"Well, then, I passed that way," she said, "and as I found beneath my steps many fresh flowers newly blown, no doubt Phillis, Amaryllis, Galatea, and all your shepherdesses had passed the same way before me."

The king bit his lips, for the recital was becoming more and more threatening. "My little Naiad," continued Madame, "was murmuring her little song in the bed of her rivulet; as I perceived that she accosted me by touching the bottom of my dress, I did not think of receiving her advances ungraciously, and more particularly so, since, after all, a divinity,

even though she be of a second grade, is always of greater importance than a mortal, though a princess. I, thereupon, accosted the Naiad ; bursting into a laughter, this is what she said to me :

“Fancy, princess . . . ? You understand, sire, it is the Naiad who is speaking.”

The king bowed assentingly ; and Madame continued :—“Fancy, princess, the banks of my little stream have just witnessed a most amusing scene. Two shepherds, full of curiosity, even indiscreetly so, have allowed themselves to be mystified in a most amusing manner by three nymphs, or three shepherdesses.’ I beg your pardon, but I do not now remember if it were a nymph or a shepherdess she said ; but it does not much matter, so we will continue.”

The king, at this opening, coloured visibly, and Saint-Aignan, completely losing countenance, began to open his eyes in the greatest possible anxiety.

“‘The two shepherds,’ pursued my nymph, still laughing, ‘followed in the wake of the three young ladies,—no, I mean, of the three nymphs ; forgive me, I ought to say, of the three shepherdesses.’ It is not always wise to do that, for it may be awkward for those who are followed. I appeal to all the ladies present, and not one of them, I am sure, will contradict me.”

The king, who was much disturbed by what he suspected was about to follow, signified his assent by a gesture.

“‘But,’ continued the Naiad, ‘the shepherdesses had noticed Tyrcis and Amyntas gliding into the wood, and, by the light of the moon, they had recognised them through the grove of trees.’ Ah, you laugh !” interrupted Madame ; “wait, wait, you are not yet at the end.”

The king turned pale ; Saint-Aignan wiped his forehead, which was bedewed with perspiration. Among the groups of ladies present could be heard smothered laughter and stealthy whispers.

“‘The shepherdesses, I was saying, noticing how indiscreet the two shepherds were, proceeded to sit down at the foot of the royal oak ; and when they perceived that their indiscreet listeners were sufficiently near, so that not a syllable of what they might say could be lost, they addressed towards them very innocently, in the most innocent manner in the world indeed, a passionate declaration, which from the vanity natural to all men, and even to the most sentimental of shepherds, seemed to the two listeners as sweet as honey.’”

The king, at these words, which the assembly was unable to hear without laughing, could not restrain a flash of anger darting from his eyes. As for Saint-Aignan, he let his head fall upon his breast, and concealed, under a bitter laugh, the extreme annoyance he felt.

“Oh,” said the king, drawing himself up to his full height, “upon my word, that is a most amusing jest, certainly ; but, really and truly, are you sure you quite understood the language of the Naiads?”

“The comte, sire, pretends to have perfectly understood that of the Dryads,” retorted Madame, eagerly.

“No doubt,” said the king ; “but you know the comte has the weakness to aspire to become a member of the Academy, so that, with this object in view, he has learnt all sorts of things of which very happily you are ignorant ; and it might possibly happen that the language of the Nymph of the Waters might be among the number of things which you have not studied.”

“Of course, sire,” replied Madame, “for facts of that nature one does not altogether rely upon one’s self alone ; a woman’s ear is not infallible, so says Saint Augustin ; and I, therefore, wished to satisfy myself by other

opinions besides my own, and as my Naiad, who, in her character of a goddess, is polyglot,—is not that the expression, M. de Saint-Aignan?"

"Yes," said the latter, quite out of countenance.

"Well," continued the princess, "as my Naiad, who, in her character of a goddess, had, at first, spoken to me in English, I feared, as you suggest, that I might have misunderstood her, and I requested Mesdemoiselles de Montalais, De Tonnay-Charente, and De la Vallière, to come to me, begging my Naiad to repeat to me in the French language the recital she had already communicated to me in English."

"And did she do so?" inquired the king.

"Oh, she is the most polite divinity that exists! Yes, sire, she did so; so that no doubt whatever remains on the subject. Is it not so, young ladies?" said the princess, turning towards the left of her army; "did not the Naiad say precisely what I have related, and have I, in any one particular, exceeded the truth, Phillis? I beg your pardon, I mean Mademoiselle Aure de Montalais?"

"Precisely as you have stated, Madame," articulated Mademoiselle de Montalais, very distinctly.

"Is it true, Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente?"

"The perfect truth," replied Athenais, in a voice quite as firm, but yet not so distinct.—"And you, La Vallière?" asked Madame.

The poor girl felt the king's ardent look fixed upon her,—she dared not deny it, she dared not tell a falsehood, and bowed her head simply in token of assent. Her head, however, was not raised again, half-chilled as she was by a coldness more bitter than that of death. This triple testimony overwhelmed the king. As for Saint-Aignan, he did not even attempt to dissemble his despair, and, hardly knowing what he said, he stammered out, "An excellent jest! admirably played!"

"A just punishment for curiosity," said the king, in a hoarse voice. "Oh! who would think, after the chastisement that Tyrcis and Amyntas had suffered, of endeavouring to surprise what is passing in the heart of shepherdesses? Assuredly, I shall not for one; and you, gentlemen?"

"Nor I! nor I!" repeated, in a chorus, the group of courtiers.

Madame was filled with triumph at the king's annoyance; and was full of delight, thinking that her story had been, or was to be, the termination of the whole matter. As for Monsieur, who had laughed at the two stories without comprehending anything about them, he turned toward De Guiche, and said to him, "Well, comte, you say nothing; can you not find something to say? Do you pity M. Tyrcis and M. Amyntas, for instance?"

"I pity them with all my soul," replied De Guiche; "for in very truth, love is so sweet a fancy, that to lose it, fancy though it may be, is to lose more than life itself. If, therefore, these two shepherds thought themselves beloved,—if they were happy in that idea, and if, instead of that happiness, they meet with not only that empty void which resembles death, but jeers and jests at that love, which is worse than a thousand deaths,—in that case, I say that Tyrcis and Amyntas are the two most unhappy men I know."

"And you are right, too, Monsieur de Guiche," said the king; "for, in fact, the death we speak of is a very hard return for a little curiosity."

"That is as much as to say, then, that the story of my Naiad has displeased the king?" asked Madame, innocently.

"Nay, Madame, undeceive yourself," said Louis, taking the princess by the hand; "your Naiad, on the contrary, has pleased me, and the more

, because she has been more truthful, and because her tale, I ought to add, is confirmed by the testimony of unimpeachable witnesses."

These words fell upon La Vallière accompanied by a look that no one, from Socrates to Montaigne, could have exactly defined. The look and the king's remark succeeded in overpowering the unhappy girl, who, with her head upon Montalais's shoulder, seemed to have fainted away. The king rose, without remarking this circumstance, of which no one, moreover, took any notice, and, contrary to his usual custom, for generally he remained late in Madame's apartments, he took his leave, and retired to his own side of the palace. Saint-Aignan followed him, leaving the rooms in as great a state of despair as he had entered them in a state of delight. Mademoiselle de Tonnay Charente, less sensitive than La Vallière, was not much frightened, and did not faint. However, the last look of Saint-Aignan had hardly been so majestic as the last look of the king.

## CHAPTER CXXXIII.

### ROYAL PSYCHOLOGY.

THE king returned to his apartments with hurried steps. The reason he walked as fast as he did, was probably to avoid tottering in his gait. He seemed to leave behind him as he went along a trace of a mysterious sorrow. This gaiety of manner, which every one had remarked in him on his arrival, and which they had been delighted to perceive, had not perhaps been understood in its true sense ; but his stormy departure, his disordered countenance, all knew, or at least thought they could tell the reason of. Madame's levity of manner, her somewhat bitter jests,—bitter for persons of a sensitive disposition, and particularly for one of the king's character : the great resemblance which naturally existed between the king and an ordinary mortal, were among the reasons assigned for the precipitate and unexpected departure of his majesty. Madame, keensighted enough in other respects, did not, however, at first see anything extraordinary in it. It was quite sufficient for her to have inflicted some slight wound upon the vanity or self-esteem of one, who, so soon forgetting the engagements he had contracted, seemed to have undertaken to disdain, without cause, the noblest and highest prizes. It was not an unimportant matter for Madame, in the present position of affairs, to let the king perceive the difference which existed between the bestowal of his affections on one in a high station, and the running after some passing fancy, like a youth fresh from the provinces. With regard to those higher-placed affections, recognising their dignity and their unlimited influence, acknowledging in some respects a certain etiquette and display—a monarch, not only did not act in a manner derogatory to his high position, but found even a repose, security, mystery, and general respect therein. On the contrary, in the debasement of a common or humble attachment, he would encounter, even among his meanest subjects, carping and sarcastic remarks ; he would forfeit his character of infallibility and inviolability. Having descended to the region of petty human miseries, he would be subjected to its paltry contentions. In one word, to convert the royal divinity into a mere mortal by striking at his heart, or rather even at his face, like the meanest of his subjects, was to inflict a terrible blow upon the pride of that generous nature. Louis was more easily captivated by vanity than by affection. Madame had wisely calculated her vengeance, and it has been seen, also,

in what manner she carried it out. Let it not be supposed, however, that Madame possessed such terrible passions as the heroines of the Middle Ages possessed, or that she regarded things in a sombre point of view; on the contrary, Madame, young, amiable, of cultivated intellect, coquettish, loving in her nature, but rather from fancy, or imagination, or ambition, than from her heart—Madame, we say, on the contrary, inaugurated that epoch of light and fleeting amusements which distinguished the hundred and twenty years which intervened between the half of the seventeenth century and the three-fourths of the eighteenth. Madame saw, therefore, or rather fancied she saw, things under their true aspect. She knew that the king, her august brother-in-law, had been the first to ridicule the humble La Vallière, and that, in accordance with his usual custom, it was hardly probable he would ever love the person who had excited his laughter, even had it been only for a moment. Moreover, was not her vanity present, that evil influence which plays so important a part in that comedy of dramatic incidents called the life of a woman; did not her vanity tell her, aloud, in a subdued voice, in a whisper, in every variety of tone, that she could not, in reality, she a princess, young, beautiful, and rich, be compared to the poor La Vallière, as youthful as herself, it is true, but far less pretty certainly, and utterly poor? And surprise need not be excited with respect to Madame; for it is known that the greatest characters are those who flatter themselves the most in the comparison they draw between themselves and others, between others and themselves. It may perhaps be asked what was Madame's motive for an attack which had been so skilfully combined? Why was there such a display of forces, if it were not seriously the intention to dislodge the king from a heart that had never been occupied before, in which he seemed disposed to take refuge? Was there any necessity, then, for Madame to attach so great an importance to La Vallière, if she did not fear her? Yet Madame did not fear La Vallière in that point of view in which an historian, who knows everything, sees into the future, or rather the past. Madame was neither a prophetess nor a sybil; nor could she, any more than another, read what was written in that terrible and fatal book of the future, which records in its most secret pages the most serious events. No; Madame desired simply to punish the king for having availed himself of secret means altogether feminine in their nature; she wished to prove to him that, if he made use of offensive weapons of that nature, she, a woman of ready wit and high descent, would assuredly discover, in the arsenal of her imagination, defensive weapons proof even against the thrusts of a monarch. Moreover, she wished him to learn that, in a warfare of that description, kings are held of no account, or, at all events, that kings who fight on their own behalf, like ordinary individuals, may witness the fall of their crown in the first encounter; and that, in fact, if he had expected to be adored by all the ladies of the court from the very first, from a confident reliance on his mere appearance, it was a pretension which was most preposterous, and insulting even for certain persons who filled a higher position than others, and that a lesson being taught in season to this royal personage, who assumed too high and haughty a carriage, would be rendering him a great service. Such, indeed, were Madame's reflections with respect to the king. The event itself was not thought of. And in this manner, it will have been seen that she had exercised her influence over the minds of her maids of honour, and, with all its accompanying details, had arranged the comedy which had just been acted. The king was completely bewildered by it; for the first time since he had escaped

from the trammels of M. de Mazarin, he found himself treated as a man. A similar severity from any of his subjects would have been at once resisted by him. *Les pouvoirs croissent dans la lutte*. But to attack women, to be attacked by them, to have been imposed upon by mere girls from the country, who had come from Blois expressly for that purpose, it was the depth of dishonour for a young sovereign full of that pride which his personal advantages and his royal power inspired him with. There was nothing he could do—neither reproaches, nor exile—nor even could he admit the annoyance he felt. To show any vexation would have been to admit that he had been touched, like Hamlet, by a sword from which the button had been removed—the sword of ridicule. To show vexation towards women, what humiliation ! especially when these women in question gave laughter on their side, as a means of vengeance. Oh ! if, instead of leaving all the responsibility of the affair to these women, one of the courtiers had had anything to do with the intrigue, how delightedly would Louis have seized the opportunity of turning the Bastille to a profitable account ! But there again the king's anger paused, checked by reason. To be the master of armies, of prisons, of an almost divine authority, and to exert that almost almighty power in the service of a petty grudge, would be unworthy not only of a monarch, but even of a man. It was necessary, therefore, simply to swallow the affront in silence, and to wear his usual gentleness and graciousness of expression. It was essential to treat Madame as a friend. As a friend ! . . . Well, and why not ? Either Madame had been the instigator of the affair, or the affair itself had found her passive. If she had been the instigator of it, it certainly was a bold measure on her part ; but, at all events, it was but natural in her. Who was it that had sought her in the earliest moments of her married life, to whisper words of love in her ear ? Who was it that had dared to calculate the possibility of committing a crime against the marriage vow—a crime, too, still more deplorable on account of the relationship between them ? Who was it who, shielded behind his royal authority, had said to this young creature, “ Be not afraid, love but the King of France, who is above all, and a movement of whose sceptred hand will protect you against all attacks, even from your own remorse ? ” And she had listened to and obeyed the royal voice, had been influenced by his ensnaring tones ; and now that she had, morally speaking, sacrificed her honour in listening to him, she saw herself repaid for her sacrifice by an infidelity the more humiliating, since it was occasioned by a woman far beneath her own station in the world.

Had Madame, therefore, been the instigator of the revenge, she would have been right. If, on the contrary, she had remained passive in the whole affair, what grounds had the king to be angry with her on that account ? Was it for her to restrain, or rather could she restrain, the chattering of a few country girls ? and was it for her, by an excess of zeal which might have been misinterpreted, to check, at the risk of increasing it, the impertinence of their conduct ? All these various reasonings were like so many actual stings to the king's pride ; but when he had carefully, in his own mind, gone over all the various causes of complaint, Louis was surprised, upon due reflection—in other words, after the wound had been dressed—to find that there were other causes of suffering, secret, unendurable, and unrevealed. There was one circumstance which he dared not confess, even to himself ; namely, that the acute pain from which he was suffering had its seat in his heart. The fact is, he had permitted his heart to be gratified by La Vallière's innocent confession. He had dreamed

of a pure affection—of an affection for Louis the man, and not the sovereign—of an affection free from all self-interest ; and his heart, more youthful and more simple than he had imagined it to be, had bounded forward to meet that other heart which had just revealed itself to him by its aspirations. The commonest thing in the complicated history of love is the double inoculation of love to which any two hearts are subjected—the one loves nearly always before the other, in the same way that the latter finishes nearly always by loving after the other. In this way the electric current is established, in proportion to the intensity of the passion which is first kindled. The more Mademoiselle de la Vallière had shown her affection, the more the king's affection had increased. And it was precisely that which had surprised his majesty. For it had been fairly demonstrated to him that no sympathetic current had been the means of hurrying his heart away in its course, because there had been no confession of love in the case—because the confession was, in fact, an insult towards the man and towards the sovereign ; and finally, because—and the word, too, burnt like a hot iron—because, in fact, it was nothing but a mystification after all. This girl, therefore, who, in strictness, could not lay claim to beauty, or birth, or great intelligence—who had been selected by Madame herself, on account of her unpretending position, had not only aroused the king's regard, but had, moreover, treated him with disdain—he, the king, a man who, like an eastern potentate, had but to bestow a glance, to indicate with his finger, to throw his handkerchief. And, since the previous evening, his mind had been so absorbed with this girl that he could think and dream of nothing but her. Since the previous evening his imagination had been occupied by clothing her image with all those charms to which she could not lay claim. In very truth, he whom such vast interests summoned, and whom so many women smiled upon invitingly, had, since the previous evening, consecrated every moment of his time, every throb of his heart, to this sole dream. It was, indeed, either too much, or not sufficient. The indignation of the king, making him forget everything, and, among others, that Saint-Aignan was present, was poured out in the most violent imprecations. True it is that Saint-Aignan had taken refuge in a corner of the room ; and, from his corner, regarded the tempest passing over. His own personal disappointment seemed contemptible, in comparison with the anger of the king. He compared with his own petty vanity the prodigious pride of offended majesty, and, being well read in the hearts of kings in general, and in those of powerful kings in particular, he began to ask himself if this weight of anger, as yet held in suspense, would not soon terminate by falling upon his own head, for the very reason that others were guilty, and he innocent. In point of fact, the king, all at once, did arrest his hurried pace ; and fixing a look full of anger upon Saint-Aignan, suddenly cried out : “ And you, Saint-Aignan ? ”

Saint-Aignan made a sign, which was intended to signify,—“ Well, sire ? ” —“ Yes ; you have been as silly as myself, I think.”

“ Sire,” stammered out Saint-Aignan.

“ You permitted yourself to be deceived by this shameful trick.”

“ Sire,” said Saint-Aignan, whose agitation was such as to make him tremble in every limb, “ let me entreat your majesty not to exasperate yourself. Women, you know, are creatures full of imperfections, created for the misfortune of others ; to expect anything good from them is to require them to do impossibilities.”

The king, who had the greatest consideration for himself, and who had

gun to acquire over his emotions that command which he preserved for them all his life, perceived that he was doing an outrage to his own dignity in displaying so much animation about so trifling an object. "No," he said, hastily; "you are mistaken, Saint-Aignan; I am not angry; I can only wonder that we should have been turned into ridicule so cleverly and with such boldness, by these two young girls. I am particularly surprised that, although we might have informed ourselves accurately on the subject, we were silly enough to leave the matter for our own hearts to decide upon."

"The heart, sire, is an organ which requires positively to be reduced to its physical functions, but which must be deprived of all its moral functions. For my own part, I confess, that when I saw that your majesty's heart was so taken up by this little——"

"My heart taken up! I!—my mind might, perhaps, have been so; but, as for my heart, it was——" Louis again perceived that, in order to conceal one blank, he was about to disclose another. "Besides," he added, "I have no fault to find with the girl. I was quite aware that she was involved with some one else."—"The Vicomte de Bragelonne. I informed your majesty of the circumstance."

"You did so; but you were not the first who told me. The Comte de Fère had solicited from me Mademoiselle de la Vallière's hand for his son. And, on his return from England, the marriage shall be celebrated, since they love each other."

"I recognise your majesty's generosity of disposition in that act."  
"So, Saint-Aignan, we will cease to occupy ourselves with these matters any longer," said Louis.

"Yes, we will digest the affront, sire," replied the courtier, with resignation.—"Besides, it will be a very easy matter to do so," said the king, heaving a sigh.

"And, by way of a beginning, I will set about the composition of an epigram upon all three of them. I will call it 'The Naiad and Dryad,' which will please Madame."

"Do so, Saint Aignan, do so," said the king, indifferently. "You shall read me your verses; they will amuse me. Ah! it does not signify, Saint-Aignan," added the king, like a man breathing with difficulty, "the blow requires more than human strength to support in a dignified manner." As the king thus spoke, assuming an air of the most angelic patience, one of the servants in attendance knocked gently at the door. Saint-Aignan drew aside, out of respect.—"Come in," said the king. The servant partially opened the door. "What is it?" inquired Louis.

The servant held out a letter of a triangular shape. "For your majesty," he said.—"From whom?"

"I do not know. One of the officers on duty gave it me."  
The valet, in obedience to a gesture of the king, handed him the letter. The king advanced towards the candles, opened the note, read the signature, and uttered a loud cry. Saint-Aignan was sufficiently respectful not to look on; but, without looking on, he saw and heard all, and ran towards the king, who with a gesture dismissed the servant. "Oh, Heavens!" said the king, as he read the note.

"Is your majesty unwell?" inquired Saint-Aignan, stretching forward his arms.—"No, no, Saint-Aignan—read!" and he handed him the note.

Saint-Aignan's eyes fell upon the signature. "La Vallière!" he exclaimed. "Oh, sire!"

"Read, read!" And Saint-Aignan read:—

"Forgive my importunity, sire ; and forgive, also, the absence of the formalities which may be wanting in this letter. A note seems to me more speedy and more urgent than a despatch. I venture, therefore, to address this note to your majesty. I have returned to my own room, overcome with grief and fatigue, sire ; and I implore your majesty to grant me the favour of an audience, which will enable me to confess the truth to my sovereign. "Signed, "LOUISE DE LA VALLIERE."

"Well?" asked the king, taking the letter from Saint-Aignan's hands, who was completely bewildered by what he had just read.

"Well!" repeated Saint-Aignan.

"What do you think of it?"—"I hardly know."

"Still, what is your opinion?"

"Sire, the young lady must have heard the muttering of the thunder, and has got frightened."—"Frightened at what?" asked Louis with dignity.

"Why, your majesty has a thousand reasons to be angry with the author or authors of so hazardous a joke ; and, if your majesty's memory were to be awakened in a disagreeable sense, it would be a perpetual menace hanging over the head of this imprudent girl."

"Saint-Aignan, I do not think as you do."

"Your majesty doubtless sees more clearly than myself."

"Well! I see affliction and restraint in these lines, and more particularly since I recollect some of the details of the scene which took place this evening in Madame's apartments——" The king suddenly stopped, leaving his meaning unexpressed.

"In fact," resumed Saint-Aignan, "your majesty will grant an audience, nothing is clearer than that in the whole affair."

"I will do better still, Saint-Aignan."

"What is that, sire?"—"Put on your cloak."

"But, sire——"

"You know the room where Madame's maids of honour are lodged?"

"Certainly."

"You know some means of obtaining an entrance there?"

"As far as that is concerned, I do not."

"At all events, you must be acquainted with some one there."

"Really, your majesty is the source of every good idea."

"You do know some one, then. Who is it?"

"I know a certain gentleman who is on very good terms with a certain young lady there."

"One of the maids of honour?"—"Yes, sire."

"With Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, I suppose?" said the king, laughing.—"Unfortunately, no, sire ; with Montalais."

"What is his name?"—"Malicorne."

"And you can depend on him?"

"I believe so, sire. He ought to have a key of some sort in his possession ; and if he should happen to have one, as I have done him a service, why he will return it."

"Nothing could be better. Let us set off, then." The king threw his own cloak over Saint-Aignan's shoulders, asked him for his, and then both went out into the vestibule.









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